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Standard
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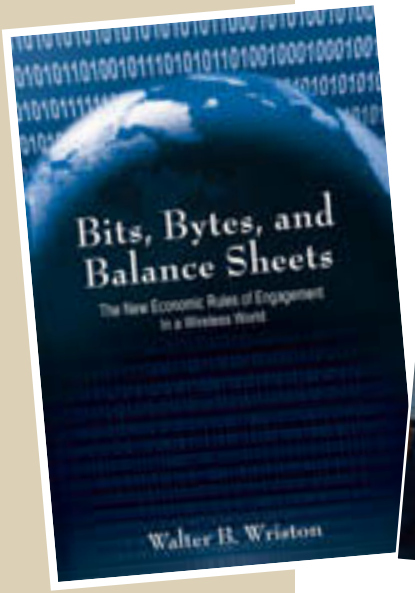

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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You Say Bravery, We Say Brokaw

"Tomorrow," said the ad in last Monday's *New York Times*, "the Committee to Protect Journalists will honor five brave journalists."

With support from the Knight Foundation, the CPJ is launching "a global campaign to combat impunity for the killers of journalists. Murder is the ultimate form of censorship," the ad continues. "Working with our colleagues around the world, we must now break the cycle of impunity." So, who are the "five brave journalists . . . who have fought for freedom" that the Knight Foundation and the Committee to Protect Journalists choose to honor? Dmitry Muratov of Russia, Mazhar Abbas of Pakistan, Adela Navarro Bello of Mexico, Gao Qinrong of China, and Tom Brokaw of the United States.

Here at The Scrapbook, we confess with some embarrassment, the names of Muratov, Abbas, Bello, and Qinrong don't ring any bells. But when it comes to bravery in the face of death, in the fight for freedom, the struggle against violence, and the courage to speak truth to power, the name of Tom Brokaw springs instantly to mind.

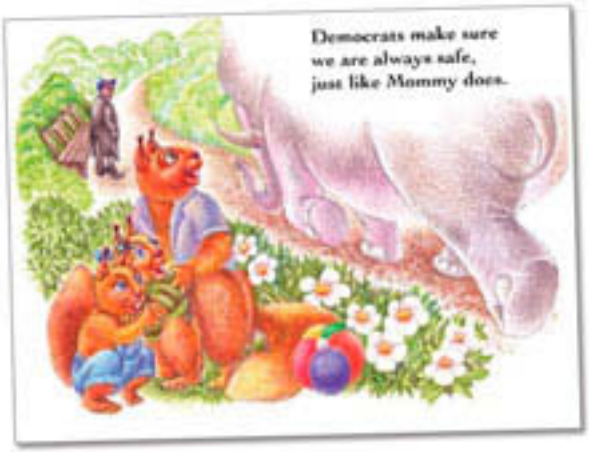
You think it's easy to sit behind an anchor desk and read the news, to trade quips with David Letterman, moderate discussions, chair panels, deliver commencement addresses, or edit coffee-table books? Think again. Who among us will ever forget the night when Tom Brokaw began his evening broadcast of the news—even though the TelePrompTer was broken? Or his legendary interview—eyeball-to-eyeball—with Nancy Reagan? When Iraq invaded Kuwait, when Princess Diana died, when the Twin Towers and Pentagon were attacked on 9/11, Brokaw had the guts to go on the air and read the news.

Sure, there were critics, even senators and presidents, and powerful business executives, who didn't like what Brokaw was doing, who complained about the way he afflicted the comfortable, who moaned about the way he comforted the afflicted, who sometimes even switched channels to ABC or CBS. Brokaw didn't care. He'd come up through the ranks, he'd earned his stripes, he'd co-anchored the *Today Show*, he'd faced danger a thousand times. And nothing—not snow, not writers' strikes, not happy-talk local news or bad makeup—ever kept Tom Brokaw from fighting for what he believed.

Next week: The Scrapbook salutes John Chancellor, the man who won the Cold War. ♦

Intellectual Stirrings on the Left

For a generation, thanks to the contributions of the conservative movement, the Republican party has been acknowledged as the party of ideas. But look out: The times they are a-changin'! The bestseller lists are now full of tomes from the likes of *New York Times* columnist Paul Krugman (*The Conscience of a Liberal*). And then there's the junior division of the liberal renaissance, represented here by Jeremy Zilber's *Why Mommy is a Democrat*, a concise version of the Krugman thesis (Democrats good, Republicans bad) only with col-



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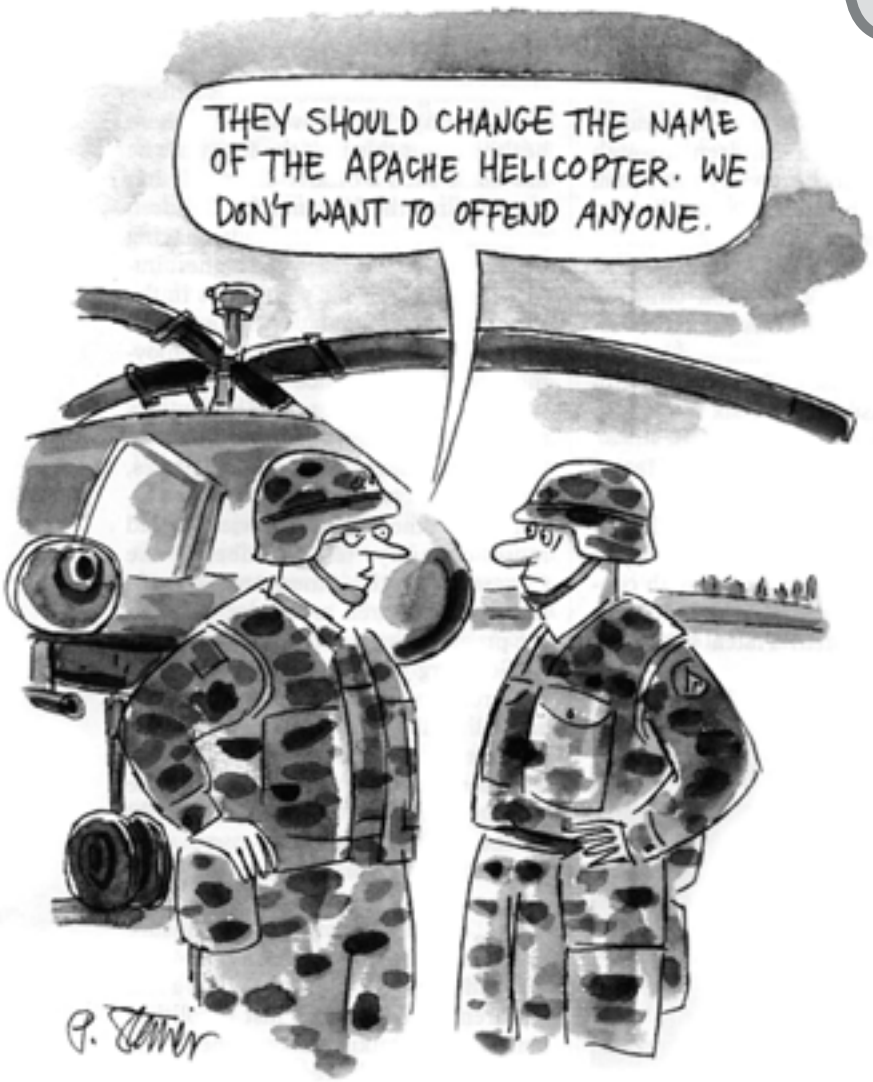

(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of May 10, 1999)

orful illustrations. We especially liked these two pages: the small, peaceable rodent Democrats needing protection from an ambling elephant (get it?) and the Democratic mommy making sure that her children go to the expensive university.

There are many fine books reviewed elsewhere in this issue, but for the Democrats on your Christmas list you'll want to stop right here and go to the website littledemocrats.net, where Zilber's classic is being peddled. It will raise the IQs of all your liberal friends. And there are discounts for bulk orders if you are a Democratic party fundraiser. ♦

More Recommended Reading

All you politics junkies who aren't reading Matthew Continetti's *Campaign Standard* blog on our website are missing out—not just on the musings of Bill Kristol, Fred Barnes, and other Weekly Standard contributors, but on the insights of pseudonymous blogger Richelieu. Here is one recent post from the Cardinal:

Today's sermon is about hatred. Specifically that wonderful, molten, candidate-upon-candidate intra-party hatred that makes a presidential primary go and go. Most candidates, by nature, hate each other. But over time, each candidate develops two special hatreds, each boiling at an intensity far above the rest.

First, there is the rational hatred, as in, "This bastard stands between me and my rightful place as the nominee so this bastard must die." Then, there is the secret hatred. This is the strongest hatred of all. Often it began as affection and turned very, very dark. The secret hatred is not always rational and is often the mysterious reason late in the race that a candidate suddenly does something—such as endorsing their officially hated candidate—that is hard to understand by standard political calculus. But the real motive is always the same: to punish the secretly hated candidate.

With this in mind, let's look at the field and take a guess at the top hatreds in the race:

Hillary Clinton. Official hatred: Barack Obama. The gall! So flashy, so smart, so . . . black. And therefore so maddeningly hard to liquidate in the usual manner. Secret hatred: Bill Clinton. *"All I asked for were two successful, non-controversial terms from him, then I . . . "*

Barack Obama. Official hatred: John Edwards. No Edwards in Iowa and Obama would get most of that vote and win. Secret hatred: Hillary Clinton. Jive-ass flip-flopper.

John Edwards. Official hatred: Barack Obama. Same as above, but backwards. Secret hatred: Hillary Clinton. How dare anybody have such naked ambition!

Bill Richardson. Official hatred: Hillary Clinton. He's the résumé candidate, but she's grabbed the experience mantle. Secret hatred: Barack Obama. Black trumps Latino.

Chris Dodd and Joe Biden. Official hatred: Barack Obama. Junior senator, what nerve. Secret hatred: each other.

For Richelieu's take on the secret hatreds of the Republican field, and much else besides, hie thee to *weeklystandard.com*. ♦

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Casual

Nothing For Me, Thanks

This year for Christmas, get me nothing. A lot of it.

After moving house recently and boxing up all our possessions, I've concluded that we have too much stuff. So while there are gifts I should like to receive—a nice bottle of wine always hits the spot—what I most want this holiday season is less of everything.

This goes double for my children. "Nothing" doesn't begin to describe what I would like them to receive. If I were writing my daughter's letter to Santa, it would go something like:

> Dear Santa,
>
> Due to the proliferation of cheap consumer goods out of China, the price of factory toys is artificially low right now. As a result I have already in my possession many more toys than I can ever play with, and they are taking up a huge amount of space in my parents' house. This year, when you come down the chimney, instead of leaving me a nice dollhouse or a new educational game that whistles annoyingly when I correctly identify a letter, please take away a few of the toys I already have and deliver them to someone else or, if all the other kids also seem to have too much stuff, just throw mine in the garbage or recycling. Thanks.
>
> Say hello to Mrs. Claus and Rudolph,
>
> Madeline, 4

My two children have many times the quantity of toys I remember from growing up in a house with six children. In the movie *Heartburn*, Jeff Daniels's character complains that his diminished sense of color comes from having grown up with a box of 8 crayons. If only he'd had one of those nicer sets of 32 or 64 crayons, everything might have been different. Well, if a larger volume of art supplies really leads to a keener sense of shade, light, and color, then the scribbled drawings on my refrigerator must be masterpieces.

What drive me nuts, though, are the toys that mimic adult things. If my wife, Cynthia, has her way, our daughter will receive for Christmas this year her third kitchen set. The first one was a humble wooden kitchen that was so tiny, with rounded edges and painted-on burners, that, more than anything, it looked like a storybook drawing of a kitchen. It has since been augmented and replaced by far more sophisticated pots, pans, oven, and so on. I say replaced, but what I really mean is that the old toys are simply buried in bins, corners, boxes, and bookshelves behind the new, better toys. Anyway, the new kitchen my wife wants to buy her for Christmas looks like we could make Thanksgiving dinner in it. It has this great stovetop and oven range, refrigerator, sink, and more appliances than my own kitchen.

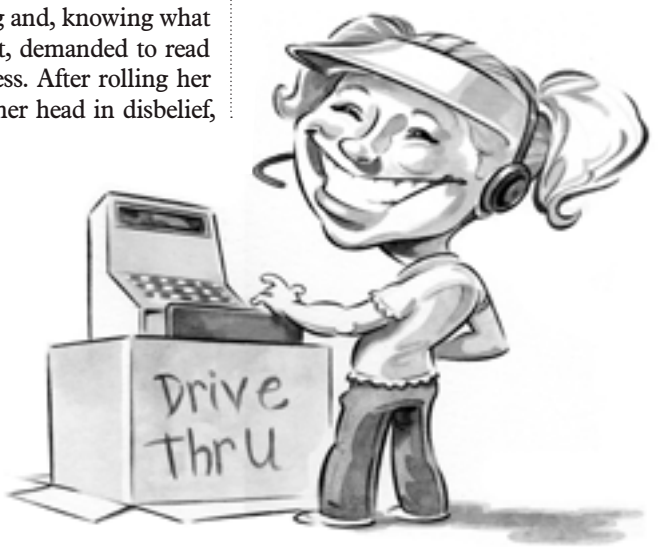
My wife and I obviously have some disagreements to work through. I think a child's natural desire for possessions should be tempered by a sense of limits. She thinks I'm insane.

In fact she just entered the room where I'm working and, knowing what I am writing about, demanded to read the work-in-progress. After rolling her eyes and shaking her head in disbelief, she accused me yet again of knowing absolutely nothing about what it's like out there, how many toys other parents buy for their children, and how, in fact, our home is a study in toy austerity. "Have you been to McKenzie's house? It's like a doll emporium. And of course she has this huge elaborate kitchen. You're lucky I'm so restrained."

Children do like to play at what they see adults do. But the line must be drawn somewhere. I know, for instance, it must be drawn before your offspring comes to own an item like the one I just spied in a Lillian Vernon catalog that came in the mail. This 40-piece toy set includes a fabric visor, headset, and a walkie-talkie for playing cashier at a fast-food drive-through. Call me a snob, but imagining that they are working the drive-through is just not what children should be doing at play time. It may be far more realistic than the games of Royal Family we play—I'm always the king, my daughter always the princess—but what's the point of pretending to be something ordinary, something common? Play time is for imagining the extraordinary.

Tomorrow, while my wife's out, I think my daughter and I will play Royal Family again, and we will talk about how much the queen appreciates her husband's wisdom. "Why just the other day," I'll intone, "Her Highness was saying how measured and sober was the king's opinion on the royal children's toys."

David Skinner



DARREN GYGI

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Terrorists at Sea

Seth Cropsey wrote in his article "Don't Give Up the Ships" (November 19) that "No terrorists have struck from the sea." This will be news to the United States Navy, which has been the target of at least two recent attempted seaborne terrorist attacks, one of them successful. Cropsey may have forgotten al Qaeda's attack-by-sea that nearly sunk the USS *Cole* and killed 17 of her crew in 2000, but I suspect most Americans have not.

The list of terrorists who have "struck from the sea" must include the 2002 attack on the French supertanker *Limburg*, which killed one merchant sailor and spilled 90,000 barrels of oil into the Gulf of Aden. Further examples include the attack on the *Achille Lauro*, in which one American was killed in 1985, as well as the ongoing operations of Islamic (and sometimes overtly al Qaeda affiliated) high seas pirates off the African coast, in the Strait of Malacca, and in the Philippine archipelago. And what of the seaborne smuggling of weapons among Middle Eastern terrorist groups and proliferators, as demonstrated by the *Karine-A* incident and the interdiction of North Korean merchant vessels carrying advanced ballistic missiles to rogue regimes?

Not only have the high seas been an important front for terrorist activity and attacks, the oceans remain the last line of defense against terrorists seeking to detonate a potential atomic weapon in the United States. Such a device would almost certainly have to reach the North American continent by sea. Only the United States Navy and Coast Guard stand in the way of a nuclear-armed terrorist who intends to explode his bomb in Los Angeles, Washington, New York, Chicago, or even Duluth, all cities which can be reached by oceangoing vessels.

The United States Navy was created to combat Islamic terrorism on the high seas, and today our Navy finds itself increasingly engaged in a renewed fight against Islamic terrorists and allied pirates who still seek to strike from the sea.

R. Scott Rogers
Alexandria, Va.

Seth Cropsey's claim that terrorists have not "struck from the sea" implies that the Navy is not involved in any maritime actions in Iraq, but this is simply not true.

I served my last tour in the Navy operating in Iraqi waters at sea and up and down Iraq's rivers. In April of 2004, a U.S. Navy PC, the Firebolt, successfully stopped a terrorist attack on an Iraqi oil platform; Coast Guardsman Nathan Bruckenthal and sailors Michael Pernaselli and Christopher Watts were all killed or died later from wounds

inflicted upon them in this attack.

I will never forget those shipmates of mine who lost their lives there.

Anthony Buch
Oak Harbor, Wash.

Seth Cropsey responds: These criticisms are fair: There have been several terrorist incidents at sea. But none approached the scope of the 9/11 attacks. The attack on the USS *Cole* in October 2000—as I argued publicly at the time—was an act of war directed against U.S. military whose duty took them in harm's way. Had that attack, as well as those that preceded it, been treated as acts of war—rather than as crimes—the chances of a large-scale 9/11 attack would have been greatly diminished. However, I stand by my point that Americans generally are not aware of the Navy's contribution to the current Middle Eastern wars, and the Navy leadership's rightful concerns about this would be better addressed by reminding the nation of the Navy's broad and enduring strategic value—which has long included crisis response and humanitarian assistance—than by redefining maritime strategy as a cooperative venture aimed at preventing conflict.

Now, That's the Ticket

William Kristol offered great advice in his editorial that suggested the Republican presidential nominee (unless it's pro-choice Rudy Giuliani) should consider running on a ticket with Joe Lieberman as vice president ("Say It's So, Joe," November 19). I have been saying for over two years the best ticket for America would be McCain/Lieberman. They would be a lame duck administration from day one, and very little would get done during the first half of their term while both sides fought each other in the White House. But I think by the second half America would follow their lead in breaking up the status quo of Washington politics. It would be either the birth of, or the alternative to, a third party.

I returned this year from three years working as a civilian with the police in Iraq where I had become as angry with the Republican party as I was with the Democrats. I was on the ground as the politics of the war in Washington adversely affected the actual war in Iraq in numerous ways. While most of that politicking was dished out by the Democrats, many Republicans folded when it came time to hold firm—all in the name of election or reelection. While I still consider myself a Republican and vote that way, I think for the good of the nation there needs to be a dramatic shift in the political paradigm. A mixed ticket of two middle of the road candidates may do the trick. It certainly couldn't get worse.

I was, and am still, a Bush supporter. I think he was the right man at the right time and took a bold risk when he chose to liberate Iraq—our only real option in order to prosecute the war on terror. He has made several mistakes along the way, but I believe he was and remains on the right path overall. The mistakes he made weren't the biggest problems for the war; it was the lack of support

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here at home that actually turned the tide over there. I watched it happen. Iraqis, and everyone in the Middle East for that matter, don't follow whom they like. They follow whom they respect or in many cases fear. In the beginning we had their respect. They were in awe of us. As support for the war diminished, their respect disappeared at a proportional rate. I watched it happen daily, weekly, monthly and then yearly. Shame on all politicians of either stripe that sold us out for their own careers.

Kudos to Senator Lieberman for his bold speech and to Kristol for bringing it to attention. Please do not publish my full name for security reasons; I am scheduled to redeploy to either Afghanistan or Iraq in January 2008.

NAME WITHHELD

PONDERING POVERTY

JOEL SCHWARTZ's review of my book *The Persistence of Poverty* ("Poverty of Ideas," November 5) is generally fair and accurate, as one would expect from Schwartz. However, Schwartz says that I support the main hypothesis of the book (that the marginal utility of deficient consumption is increasing, not diminishing) only by a questionable analogy between poor people and people suffering from bee stings.

Readers of THE WEEKLY STANDARD might like to know that I don't rest my case on this analogy at all.

For one thing, I devote a number of pages to showing that such basic goods as living space, transportation, leisure, and opportunities to participate in community life have increasing marginal utility when these goods are being used or consumed at insufficient levels. I do not argue by analogy in these pages, but rather I remind readers of experiences that will be immediately familiar to them. In a nutshell, I show that deficits of these basics bring troubles, and troubles (like other stimuli) have diminishing marginal impact; so these basics at insufficient levels have increasing marginal impact.

In addition I devote numerous pages to exposing the false reasoning that supports the contrary, textbook thesis (that the marginal utility of consumption for poor people is diminishing). Finally I show that my hypothesis makes sense of the behavior more parsimoniously than the alternatives.

America is in the middle of the wrong debate about poverty. Instead of arguing about whether the behavior of the poor is truly at odds with the textbook definition of economic rationality or only seemingly at odds with that definition, we should be questioning the validity of the textbook definition of economic rationality itself. It's time for a revision of conventional microeconomics.

CHARLES KARELIS
Washington, D.C.

TREATING MENTAL ILLNESS

WILLIAM ANDERSON's review of Thomas Szasz's book *Coercion as Cure* is excellent ("Insanity Defense," November 12). In the sixties I was temporarily taken in by Szasz's *The Myth of Mental Illness*, but within several years I outgrew that immature stage of my professional development as a psychologist. I then chose the more difficult path of discernment, doing the best I could to make accurate diagnoses of mental illness. Later I took on the even more difficult issues of subtle differentiation of authentic impairment from use of diagnosis as excuses by patients seeking the benefits of disability. I am not speaking of malingering, but of the tendency to cling to mental problems to keep disability checks coming in.

CARL E. BEGLEY
Jacksonville, Fla.

IN HIS wholesale dismissal of Thomas Szasz's work, William Anderson writes the following: "Psychiatrists try to apply scientific medicine in the service of ameliorating disturbances of thinking, feeling, and action brought about by disturbances of brain function." His admission that their "results are often less than satisfactory" glosses over the fact that psychiatrists themselves often bring on those disturbances. No one, including Szasz, denies that psychiatrists want to help us. As to the question of how (and what if anything to prescribe), few seem to agree about much of anything except that we need them.

Thomas Szasz likes to say hard things plainly. Naturally, his views are unpopular: He has taken a courageous stance in exposing certain past and present psychiatric abuses, and by so doing, rendered an invaluable service to troubled people in search of competent professional help. Those who read him carefully will find guidelines for what to avoid in a psychiatrist.

CAROL HEBALD
New York, N.Y.

GEORGIA ON OUR MINDS

IRAKLY ARESHIDZE is right to criticize Georgian president Mikhail Saakashvili's decision to declare a 15-day state of emergency in Georgia and shut down the independent TV station Imedi ("The Bloom is Off the Rose Revolution," November 26). But comparing Saakashvili to the likes of "the strongmen leading Pakistan, Venezuela, and Russia" shows a lack of judgment about what real despots are like and a failure to appreciate Georgia's progress in advancing civil rights, fighting corruption, and getting the country going economically since the revolution. Should the United States and Europe do more to deepen the democratic gains there? Absolutely. But part of that process must also include an opposition that is principled, not personality driven, and willing to adhere to constitutional norms themselves.

GARY SCHMITT
Washington, D.C.

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200 Reasons Why the Election Matters

The other day, at the annual meeting of the Federalist Society in Washington, D.C., Rudy Giuliani observed that there are "200 reasons why the next election is really important." Which 200, you ask? "The 200 federal judges that the next President of the United States will likely appoint over four years in the White House. That's roughly the average that a president gets to appoint." Actually, the average is something under 190. (Ronald Reagan appointed 379 judges in his two terms, and George Bush 192 in his one term. Bill Clinton appointed 372 judges in eight years, and George W. Bush has named 292 in his almost seven years.) But Giuliani is right about the stakes.

If the two parties saw eye-to-eye on what makes a good judge, then judicial selection wouldn't be an issue. But the two parties disagree sharply over how judges should interpret the law, including our supreme law, the Constitution. The Democrats are the party of the "living Constitution," by which is meant a Constitution that judges adapt to meet the needs of a changing society. The Republicans, if we can continue to speak generally here, are the party of the "dead Constitution," as Justice Antonin Scalia once jokingly called it. His witticism indicated the view that judges are obligated to enforce the Constitution as it was understood originally, at the time of its making.

The difference between the two approaches to constitutional adjudication may be usefully demonstrated with reference to *Roe* v. *Wade*, the 1973 case in which the Court constitutionalized the right to abortion. The Democrats running for president don't object to the Court's methodology in *Roe*. The Republicans regard the decision—rightly in our view—as the sort no judge should have rendered, because the right to abortion is located in neither the text nor the history of the Constitution.

No one can doubt that whoever is elected president will make judicial philosophy a central criterion in the process by which judges are nominated. And to the extent one approach to judging or the other, thanks to the new judges appointed, comes to dominate particular benches, its impact will be felt—just as, for 34 years now, *Roe*'s impact has been felt, in the enfeebling of the ordinary political process by which we the people otherwise would have decided for ourselves questions of abortion policy.

Right now the Supreme Court is closely divided, with four judicial liberals (John Paul Stevens, David Souter, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, and Stephen Breyer) and four judicial conservatives (Scalia, Thomas, Roberts, and Alito) and Anthony Kennedy, whose vote in the most controversial cases often determines which side prevails. No one can say for sure, of course, whether any vacancies will occur during the next president's term, but the most likely justice to depart the Court is John Paul Stevens. At 87, he is by far the oldest justice and with 32 years on the Court has now exceeded the average number of years served by justices appointed since 1970, which is 26. He's said to be in fine health, but if he were to leave the Court, a Republican president could create a conservative majority by picking someone on the order of the candidates' professed models—Scalia, Thomas, Roberts, and Alito—while a Democratic president could preserve the status quo, jurisprudentially speaking, by naming a judicial liberal.

Now, the great majority of the judges the next president will appoint will sit on district courts. They are important to the parties before them, and to the people and institutions in their jurisdiction. They, too, are "reasons why the next election is really important." But district judges can be overruled by the courts above—ultimately the Supreme Court, if the case ever gets there. Most don't. The Supreme Court decides many fewer cases than it used to—75 to 80 each term—and the twelve regular circuit courts, which decide 30,000 cases annually, effectively function as courts of final appeal. Which means their rulings in most criminal and civil cases, including those raising constitutional questions, are the law in their jurisdictions. There are 167 judges distributed among the 12 regular circuits, and the judges appointed to these courts from 2009 to 2013 are indeed very important "reasons why the next election is really important."

If we look at the composition of each circuit in terms of the president (Republican or Democrat) who appointed

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the judges and which ones are eligible for senior status during the next president's term, we can make reasonable guesses at the impact of the next president on the district courts. Assuming a Democratic president, by 2013, the First, Second, Fourth, Sixth, Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, and D.C. circuits would likely have Democrat-appointed, and thus judicially liberal, majorities. But assuming a Republican president, the First, Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth, Tenth, Eleventh, and D.C. circuits—yes, all of the circuits—would likely have Republican-appointed, and thus judicially conservative, majorities. Note that eight of the 12 circuits could go either way, depending on who the next president is. And note, too, that with a Republican president the days of the seemingly eternally liberal Ninth Circuit might finally come to an end.

Of course, in any discussion of judicial selection it is necessary to point out that if a president faces a Senate controlled by the opposite party, it may be harder for him (or her) to appoint the most compelling exponent of his (or her) judicial philosophy. Imagine the no doubt affirmative confirmation vote that would have occurred had Robert Bork been nominated in 1981 or 1986, when Republicans held the Senate. Or imagine how Roberts or Alito might have fared in the Senate had the Republicans not controlled it by a wide margin. The future of the judiciary is also at stake in the 34 Senate elections next year. And there it is not looking so good for the GOP, which, having to defend 22 seats to the Democrats' 12, could lose seats in Colorado, Nebraska, New Hampshire, and Virginia. That would reduce the number of Republican senators to 45 and make it relatively easy for a Democratic president to populate the courts with living Constitution judges.

The prospect of a Republican minority in the Senate underscores the importance especially for judicial selection of electing a Republican president. After all, in the appointment of judges, the president is the moving party: The only person who can be confirmed by the Senate is someone the president has nominated. And even if he faces a Democratic Senate with a large majority, a Republican president of sufficient skill and tenacity can see confirmed a judge who shares his judicial philosophy. Bear in mind that it was a Democratic Senate that finally did confirm Clarence Thomas.

Giuliani is right. The future of the federal judiciary is at stake on November 4, 2008. This is not an issue that divides the Republican candidates. It is an issue that divides the two parties. It is also an issue that voters, distracted by the horse-race aspect of the long campaign, may have to be reminded about, and often.

—Terry Eastland, for the Editors

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foreword by E. O. Wilson
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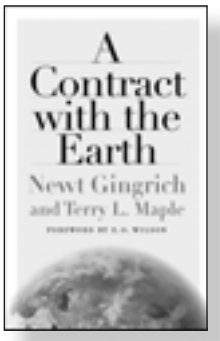

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Not Your Father's Tories

The Cameron conservatives look like winners.

BY REIHAN SALAM

British conservatives have spent a decade clawing their way back to respectability, and they finally look like a government-in-waiting. This is thanks to their leader, David Cameron, a baby-faced Old Etonian who listens to indie rock, occasionally rides a bicycle to work, and loves windmills so much he affixed one to his house. But while Cameron may come across as a bobo caricature, charmingly self-effacing yet troublingly eager to seem cool, in the last two years he has gone from shallow naïf to sure-footed statesman. He has worked tirelessly at "indigenizing" the Tories, bringing them back in step with a country that had grown more socially liberal, more ethnic, more frankly emotional, and more anti-American.

Without fully taking up the mantle of a Michael Moore Conservative—as the latest version of the anti-American Tory "Little Englanders" were dubbed in these pages in May 2004—Cameron took great pains to make it clear that unlike Tony Blair he'd never be George Bush's poodle and that his brand of conservatism was the kindest and gentlest yet. Diehard Thatcherites resented Cameron's efforts to "decontaminate" the conservative brand, but there was no denying that decontamination was necessary. Poll after poll found that popular stances on crime and immigration became *less popular* when they were adopted by the Tories.

Cameron's initial aim was a conservative party pitched directly to London's media elite: strong on civil liberties, socially liberal, and highly compassionate (i.e., eager to feel your pain). By presenting himself as the true heir to Blair, a friend of the middle class who wouldn't dare touch New Labour's mightily expanded state, Cameron sought to project that the Tories were innocuous. Hey—we love babies, too! And the environment! Cameron's big tent was big enough to include antiglobalization heartthrob and playboy Zac Goldsmith, the kind of green who thinks we have a lot to learn from Paleolithic man.

There was a certain logic to this approach, as much of the erosion in conservative support had happened among upper-middle-class suburbanites in the south, traditionally the Tory heartland. Like the Rockefeller Republicans who've flocked to the Democrats since Bill Clinton, these voters were particularly turned off by the conservatives' "nasty party" image, and it was crucial to win them back from Labour. During Blair's waning days, the approach seemed to work. The conservatives regularly trumped New Labour in the polls. But Tony Blair was even more personally unpopular in Britain than President Bush was in the United States, and the conservatives were outpolling Blair far more than they were beating Labour. It was inevitable that Blair's successor and longtime rival, Gordon Brown—a dour ex-socialist Scot who spends his spare time reading Gertrude Himmelfarb on the Victorians—would enjoy some kind of honeymoon when he took over in late June.

The early months of Brown's tenure looked like a slow-motion disaster for Cameron. It seemed as though Brown

JASON SEILER

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could finally and utterly obliterate the conservatives. By handling a series of botched terror attacks with calm authority, Brown represented everything Blair was not—there was no high-flown rhetoric about the threat to civilization. Instead, there was an understated moral seriousness. And in relations with the widely despised Bush, Brown managed to maintain a respectful distance and inch away from the British commitment to Iraq without causing a public rupture. Brown also borrowed deftly from the conservatives, by calling for patriotic education and a border police force to stem the tide of illegal migrants. Brown proved so politically successful that plans were put in place for a snap election. Writing in the *Daily Mail* in late July, the conservative columnist Peter Oborne painted a particularly bleak picture: After a fourth consecutive general election defeat, conservatives would likely split into the unreconstructed right-wing Euroskeptics and a frightened faction of centrist pragmatists, many of whom would defect to the parties of the left.

Brown had outflanked the Cameron conservatives from the right, mostly by playing the role of a serious adult to perfection. Cameron decided that the only viable strategy was to make a renewed and vigorous case for, well, conservatism. Stranger still is that it worked, resonating with a broad middle class that had abandoned the conservatives a decade ago. Indeed, a handful of polls now show the conservatives with enough of an edge over Labour to win a minuscule majority.

David Cameron delivers his keynote speech at the party conference in Blackpool, October 3.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

While the Cameron conservatives are by no means zealous supply-siders, the call for (responsible and measured) tax cuts proved potent. In early October, Cameron gave a startlingly confident speech that essentially dared Brown to call an immediate election. The conventional wisdom at the time was that the energized conservatives could, at the very least, extract a pound of flesh from Labour, reducing their majority—even possibly jeopardizing it—and anything short of an expanded majority would have made Brown look like a loser next to his predecessor—a man with a preternatural sense for the mood of Middle England. And so, as the polls shifted sharply against Labour, the cautious Brown made the decision not to tempt fate. Ever since, the very lucky conservatives have made great hay out of Brown's cowardice.

Commentators like Michael Barone and John O'Sullivan have called this a vindication of the traditional approach: Tax cuts sell! But it is rather more complicated. It took time for the Tory party to rebuild its credibility. Without a serious process of reinvention, it's likely that the latest promise of tax cuts would have fallen on deaf ears. Moreover, Labour's failures to reform the public services despite massive infusions of cash have made the public increasingly skeptical about the promises of statism and thus increasingly receptive to some aspects of the traditional conservative message.

Conservatives have made most of their gains in the prosperous southeast of England, the British region that is least dependent on government largesse. The Blair boom in financial services has transformed London into a magnet for foreign billionaires and plucky Polish plumbers. But this same prosperity has brought new anxieties. Thanks to strict environmental regulations, favored by many Tory traditionalists who put great stock in preserving the English landscape, housing prices have skyrocketed, and so have traffic congestion and the cost of living. Just as in the sprawling suburbs of America's biggest cities, the terrain of politics has shifted to these quality-of-life questions. Railing against government simply doesn't have the resonance it once did.

Cameron's new conservatism is tailor-made for these new times. In October, he gave a speech about managing "population growth." Now, at its heart this speech was about immigration, a traditional preoccupation of Tories. Though most of the British public favors curbs on immigration, they've rejected conservative rhetoric on the issue for years. Cameron was careful to talk about immigration—or rather "net migration"—in a broader context of environmental impact. He was thus also able to talk about family breakdown, which also drives the relentless demand for new housing units, which also leads to further

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encroachments on pristine rural land. There was nothing that could be characterized as racist about the speech—a charge that has often followed Tory initiatives on immigration—indeed, Cameron spent much of the speech praising immigrants and their economic impact, and he has taken a significant role in recruiting ethnic minority candidates for the party. Rather, the speech spoke to the anxieties of an affluent yet crowded country that is experiencing the downsides of robust economic growth.

So what exactly is distinctively "conservative" about all this? Isn't Cameron's just a glorified form of pothole politics? Danny Kruger, one of Cameron's key advisers, offered an answer in a brilliant pamphlet titled *On Fraternity*. He argues that Blair's New Labour project aimed to use the redistributive apparatus of the state to emancipate the individual from burdensome ties of family and neighborhood. Its radical project was to replace them with freely chosen ones defined by shared interests and tastes. For Kruger, conservatism must aim to restore the health of families and neighborhoods that have been badly undermined by statist excess. This can't be done by simply abolishing the state institutions. They must be remade in the image of the neighborhoods they serve by, for example, putting parents in charge of schools and local voters in charge of the police. Over time, the habits of self-government—as opposed to the habits of dependency—can be restored. Cameron's fuzzy talk about choice and civil society, which sounds so suspiciously Blairite, means something else entirely: It is about getting citizens to stand on their own two feet.

Having recognized that Brown has a solid reputation for economic competence (a reputation that, to the delight of the Tories, has taken a severe beating of late), Cameron and his advisers have focused on the ways in which economic life shapes family life, and vice versa. To fight poverty, Cameron is arguing that the state needs to strengthen families, not weaken them, even if that means special tax treatment and other forms of affirmative support. Indeed, there's been much talk of importing Wisconsin-style welfare reform, one of the great (if expensive) triumphs of American conservatism. Cameron's managed to suggest this without sounding divisive or in any way "nasty." The so-called "Cameroonians" are in a sense the true heirs to the American neoconservatives of the 1970s. They are sensitive to the role culture plays in perpetuating poverty. They are cautious about the power of the state and yet not allergic to using the state to meliorist ends. Perhaps most important, they enthusiastically embrace modern Britain and not Britain as it was in 1950. ♦

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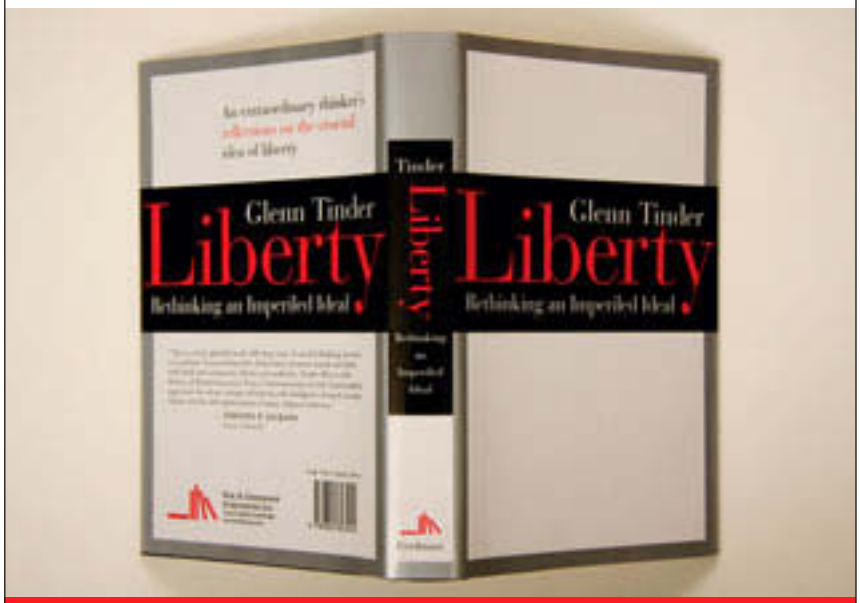

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The Case Against Despair

It's not impossible to shrink the federal government. BY FRED BARNES

The safest of all assumptions in Washington is that year after year federal spending will rise. Over the past 25 years, spending increased 84 percent in real, inflation-adjusted terms as the population of the United States rose 30 percent. Spending per capita grew 41 percent. And though President Bush is now trying to curb spending, the federal budget crossed the $2 trillion mark and is likely to exceed $3 trillion during his presidency. That's nothing to brag about.

The relentless rise in spending, unstopped even when Republicans controlled the White House and Congress, has thrown conservatives committed to limited government into despair. Their view, fashionable at the moment, is that nothing can be done to limit spending to any significant degree. It's hopeless. Even conservative voters "aren't that concerned about spending," Ramesh Ponnuru lamented in *National Review*.

A widely read essay by William Voegeli in the *Claremont Review of Books* noted that the economic boom of the past quarter-century created the perfect environment for restraining spending. "More people had more money to spend on their own health, education, and welfare, presumably enabling the government to spend less for such purposes," he wrote. But rather than recede, the public sector grew faster than the private. Conservatives blew their best chance.

While pessimism is understandable, the truth is that spending can be curbed significantly. Discretionary spending at least can be sharply controlled. The strategy is really quite simple: Repeat what worked in the past. I don't pretend that success would be easy, but it's hardly impossible.

Entitlements such as Social Security and Medicare are another story. They are on a spending path to bankruptcy. Putting them on a more sustainable course requires a different strategy. But it's also a simple one: Have individuals (and not the government) decide how to spend their retirement and health care funds. In other words, individual choice is the answer. There's a political advantage in this, namely that Americans tend to like choice.

When was spending actually curbed? In the case of discretionary spending, it happened when Ronald Reagan was president in the 1980s and then when Newt Gingrich was House speaker a decade later. In both cases, the central factor was strong leadership. When that exists—and probably *only* when that exists—spending can be curbed.

Under Reagan, discretionary spending fell (in real dollars) in 1982 after he pushed a package of spending cuts through a Democratic Congress. It dropped again in 1987 as his military buildup began to ebb. Even nondefense spending dipped in 1986 and 1987.

Republican Tom Coburn, the Senate's leading hawk on spending, believes presidential leadership is the key. "I don't think a president ever loses" if he takes the case of reducing spending to the American people. "We could really change Congress [on spending] with a strong president who really wanted to do it," Coburn told me. Maybe so.

Reagan made one big mistake on spending. He appointed a "bipartisan commission" to decide how to bail out Social Security in 1983. The commission's remedy was to raise taxes and increase the age of eligibility but not to hold down the growth of benefits or impose any reforms. The lesson here is that bipartisan commissions are to be avoided if spending restraint is the goal.

When Republicans captured Congress in 1994, Gingrich and his allies waged a vigorous, if brief, war on spending. "We had enormous discipline," says Dick Armey, then majority leader. Gingrich made Bob Livingston the chairman of the House Appropria-

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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tions Committee with strict orders to curb spending.

The result: Nondefense discretionary spending decreased in real terms in 1996 and grew only slightly for the next two years. "As the years moved forward," Armey told me, "the appropriators chafed under that discipline." And it finally broke down. But is spending restraint hopeless? Not at all, Armey insists.

Two other points. Divided government—Congress controlled by one party, the White House by the other—is a boon to limiting spending. Going back a half century, a study by William Niskanen of the Cato Institute found that "the only two long periods of fiscal restraint were the Eisenhower and Clinton administration, during both of which the opposition party controlled Congress."

The easiest spending to cut, it turns out, is defense spending. Once the Cold War ended, military spending was downsized from $320 billion in 1991 (in inflation-adjusted dollars) to $266 billion in 1996. "The reductions occurred despite the parochial interests of the members of Congress who have defense contractors and military bases in their districts," says Cato's expert on spending and taxes, Chris Edwards.

Now let's turn to entitlements, where making the case for slowing the growth of spending, much less cutting it, gets considerably harder. Recent experience is not encouraging. President Bush made a valiant effort in 2005 to reform Social Security by creating personal investment accounts. He failed miserably. Few conservatives supported him.

But partial privatization in the form of voluntary investment accounts is an inescapable element in any scheme to keep Social Security solvent. Those who choose such accounts must agree to a smaller Social Security benefit when they retire. But most of them should come out well ahead financially, given the consistent rise of the stock market over time.

Polling on investment accounts is mixed, but more favorable than not. A Gallup Poll in 2005, for example, found that 53 percent of adults would choose the investment option. My guess is that the popularity of these accounts will grow significantly since younger people, most with 401(k)s, have more experience in investing and are likely to prefer to channel some of their payroll tax into the market. Eventually, investment accounts should be politically marketable, though the president failed to sell the idea to Congress or the public.

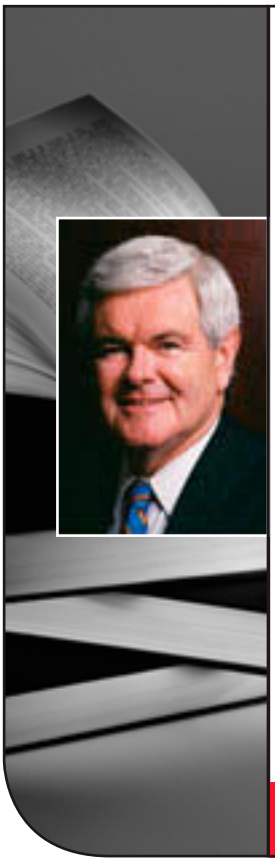
Personal accounts in one form or another also make sense for Medicare and Medicaid. Individuals could be given a tax credit or a lump sum and allowed to buy their own health insurance. Any money left over could be used for uncovered medical expenses, giving consumers an incentive to shop for medical services. The details vary from one proposal to another, but the general approach is clear.

And the larger point would be to get insurance companies to compete, both on price and breadth of benefits, for Medicare and Medicaid business. We know how competition among providers has worked with the new Medicare prescription drug benefit. Average fees are far less than expected and the program came in $4 billion under budget in 2007.

Polling on individual medical accounts is skimpy. But health savings accounts (HSA's) are increasingly used in the private sector. I suspect a version of HSA's would be popular with Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries, too.

Serious reform of entitlements with cost savings in mind may be too difficult to achieve in our current political climate. But the political climate will change. It always does. Meanwhile, we don't have to wait to curb discretionary spending. It could happen this year, now that President Bush has, at long last, jumped on the limited-government bandwagon.

The struggle to curb federal spending is never ending. It's often a thankless task. But if conservatives don't take up the fight, spending will be a lot less limited. Then there really will be reason to despair. ♦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The Huckabee Surge

He's running strong in Iowa, but has he peaked?

BY TERRY EASTLAND

For Bob Vander Plaats, January 3—the day of the Iowa caucus—can't get here quickly enough. Vander Plaats, chairman of the Mike Huckabee campaign in Iowa, can read the polls, and in the latest surveys of likely Republican caucus-goers Mike Huckabee came in second, trailing Mitt Romney by only two points in the American Research Group poll and by four points in the latest *Washington Post*/ABC News poll of the same voters. "Our goal is like that of a good basketball team," he says. "It wants to peak at tournament time. And we want to peak at caucus time."

When the former Arkansas governor announced his candidacy last winter, few political observers thought the campaign would take off. Inside the Huckabee camp, the explanation for his rise is simple. Where the "top-tier" candidates have emphasized the war on terror, says one of his staffers, Huckabee has focused on domestic issues. And he has presented himself and his views directly to voters in "retail" campaigning: "town by town, community by community, house by house," favoring the small ball of a "dinner-time conversation" over the (ostensibly) big-ball "hard-core speech" or television ad.

Vander Plaats notes that Iowa Republicans are "unsettled" about the presidential race. However much they like Rudy Giuliani, Mitt Romney, or John McCain (who seems to have written off the state), they remain open to an alternative—a conservative to their liking (even someone more conservative than Bush, if the polls are an accurate gauge). "There was anticipation that Newt [Gingrich] might get in, and we like Newt, but he doesn't get in.

Mike Huckabee

With Fred Thompson, we heard that he was another Ronald Reagan. He gets in but he overpromises and underperforms." So Iowa Republicans, says Vander Plaats, have been looking more closely at the guy from Arkansas doing the heavy retail business. You can date Huckabee's ascent from August 13 when he came in a surprising second in the Ames straw poll, having said he was hoping to finish in the top five.

Even before Ames, Huckabee had a goal for the January 3 caucus: to get, as he told me in an interview in late July, "one of three tickets out of Iowa—first class, business, or coach," meaning first, second, and third place. Publicly, at least, the campaign has no illusions about catching Romney, who has spent heavily in the state and has an effective organization. "To beat him will really prove tough," says Vander Plaats. But the polls show the distance between the two candidates narrowing in recent weeks, and Huckabee's rise has meant that Romney and other Republican candidates must take him seriously.

They've begun targeting Huckabee's gubernatorial record, especially his record on taxes and illegal immigration, the top issue for Iowa Republicans. Thus, Fred Thompson, for whom a top-three finish is a must if his campaign is ever to take off, has said Huckabee was "one of the [nation's] highest-taxing governors." And Romney, hoping to maintain if not lengthen his lead, has seized on a Huckabee proposal to give "special tuition breaks" to children of illegal immigrants.

In response to Thompson, Huckabee told me that the former senator just doesn't understand "how government functions at the state level, nor the uniqueness of Arkansas politics," implying that if he did, he would see the basis for Huckabee's fiscal policies, which included tax cuts and balanced budgets. As for the "special tuition breaks," Huckabee says they were college scholarships that the children of illegal immigrants had to earn by doing well academically. Huckabee's proposal (it was not enacted) also required the students to apply for citizenship. "The point was to have them become American citizens and not be a drain on the public treasury." Huckabee adds, "You don't punish a child," who may have been five years old upon being bought across the border, "for the crime of the parent."

The criticism of Huckabee will

DREW FRIEDMAN

Terry Eastland is the publisher of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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intensify in the coming weeks, and he anticipates more debate about his record and his proposals, including his call for replacing the income tax with a consumption tax. What may ensure a reasonably civil campaign is that Christmas is just nine days before the caucus. "No one can tell you what it means to campaign during Christmas," says Chip Saltsman, Huckabee's national campaign manager. Never has a caucus or primary been held this close to Christmas. "But if you go supernegative during the season, it probably won't be well received in Iowa," a state with a history of turning against negative campaigns.

What might help Huckabee leave Iowa with one of the coveted three tickets are the state's religious conservatives. Most observers think that the turnout for the GOP caucus will be down this year—Republicans are quite depressed—but that about half of the voters will be religious (defined as evangelical or Catholic) conservatives. Their key issues, according to Brad Sherman, pastor of Solid Rock Christian Church and the campaign's point man for cultivating support for Huckabee among pastors, remain abortion ("a big one," says Sherman) and gay marriage ("that's huge").

A Southern Baptist pastor in Arkansas for 12 years before he entered politics, Huckabee is pro-life and pro-marriage amendment. Thanks to these issues, he may have more appeal to religious conservatives than will Giuliani, who is not pro-life; Romney, who has only recently declared himself pro-life; or Thompson, who takes a federalism position on abortion and gay marriage (i.e., let the states decide). On a recent *Fox News Sunday*, Huckabee attacked Thompson's federalism approach to abortion policy: "If morality is the point here, and if it's right or wrong, not just a political question, then you can't have 50 different versions of what's right and what's wrong."

Huckabee just went up with his campaign's first television ad. It's a small buy of $60,000 and features Chuck Norris, who recently endorsed Huckabee. The ad (you can find it on YouTube) is funny to the point of being almost flippant. It takes on the question of Huckabee's conservative bona fides with Norris saluting Huckabee as "a principled, authentic conservative."

Huckabee plans to run more television ads in December. An aide says there's enough money (the campaign raised more via the web last month than it had raised from all sources in any previous month) to be on television in the right markets for about a week. Holiday advertising may limit the number of spots that any candidate can buy, which would nullify Huckabee's opponents' money advantage. "Santa Claus is our secret weapon," quips the aide.

Ultimately, the question in Iowa for all the candidates is how many supporters will turn out on the night of January 3, which could be cold and blustery, an excuse for staying home to watch the Orange Bowl. Vander Plaats says the Iowa staff is busy "identifying . . . the people who are actually going to participate and how many people they are going to take with them." He says the campaign is working with an email list of 34,000.

If Huckabee comes in second or even first, two questions for his campaign will arise, says Mike Murphy, a veteran Republican strategist who's neutral this time around. One is whether he can go beyond Iowa and succeed in states with fewer religious conservatives and thus a broader base of Republican voters. (One such state, of course, is New Hampshire, which holds its primary in early January.) The other is whether contributions will increase enough for Huckabee to buy the television ads he needs to run in several states at once. Huckabee, says Murphy, should already be advertising in all the states with early primaries.

Huckabee, although up to 12 percent in the national polls, remains a long shot for the GOP nomination. But he's run a smart campaign on a shoestring budget. He's come a long way since Ames. ♦

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The Stab That Failed

The congressional Democrats' surge-against-the-surge—a case study in political futility

By Noemie Emery

Eagerly anticipating the defeat in Iraq to which they are so much attached, some on the left have also been preparing for another contingency: the assault that they think they see coming, a drive to pin the whole wretched failure on them. Apparently, this will be "stab in the back" redux, a new iteration of the theme deployed so successfully in interwar Germany by a resourceful, ambitious Austrian corporal, who managed to propel his rise to power with the claim that World War I would have been won by his country, if not for sinister forces at home. Then, it was subversion by Jews and other disloyal elements. This time, in the left's imagining, the blame will fall on the press and the Democrats who, by pulling the plug at just the wrong moment, caused the loss of Iraq. "Nobody I know in a rational condition believes that the United States is going to have any kind of a military victory," Mark Shields said in August. "So the idea is going to be, 'We were on the cusp of victory and the rug was pulled out from under us by these willy-nilly, weak-kneed, nervous Nellies back home.'"

The problem with this is (1) that we may really win, and have no failure to blame upon anyone, and (2) that the nervous Nellies really did try to keep us from winning, indeed fought fang and claw to derail our best efforts. If they had had their way, Iraq would still be the quagmire they are so fond of invoking, and the United States—or George W. Bush, which may be the more relevant factor—would have incurred a definitive and, at least in his case, legacy-blasting defeat. It is unfair of course to call this a stab in the back, as the Democrats have been engagingly open about their intentions. In the course of the past year, they have gone from attacking a plan that had not been effective to attacking one that hadn't been tried yet, to attacking one that exceeded all expectations, while in the process ignoring reality, slandering a commanding general, and denying American forces in battle due credit for what they had done. If not backstabbing as such (see above), it is diverting enough a spectacle to merit a replay. Let us look back at this last year of battle and see how the story played out.

Noemie Emery is a contributing editor at The Weekly Standard.

When our tale opens, it is the last month of 2006, Democrats have just scored a blowout in Congress, Iraq is in shambles, and the country is calling for Bush to change course. He does. But he changes course in the other direction, radically revising his Iraq strategy, adopting aggressive new rules of engagement, and sending in 30,000 more troops. Even before the plan was announced to the public on January 10, 2007, Democrats launched their assault. Senator Christopher Dodd declared the plan useless: "A 'surge' of American troops will do nothing." Harry Reid and Nancy Pelosi, the top Democrats in the new Congress, released an open letter to Bush on January 5, decrying his redoubled effort as futile: "Surging forces is a strategy that you have already tried, and that has already failed." The surge was "a sad, ominous echo of something we've lived through in this country," according to Illinois senator Richard Durbin. "I'm confident it will not work," said John Kerry at a Senate hearing, a sentiment echoed by Barack Obama. "Verdict first, trial afterwards," said the Red Queen in *Alice in Wonderland*, unaware of her future as a role model for America's congressional Democrats. And then it really got strange.

Senate Democrats joined the Republicans in late January in unanimously confirming the appointment of General David Petraeus, a counterinsurgency expert and coauthor of the new surge proposal, sending him off with godspeed and good wishes to the front. Then they began to try to kneecap his efforts, seeking to deny him troops and/or money in an ongoing series of votes of no confidence, coupled with predictions that he would not succeed. Lest anyone at home or

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abroad not get their message, they rapidly passed two resolutions declaring their profound lack of faith in his mission. One, from Carl Levin on February 5, declared the Senate's disagreement with the "plan to augment our forces"; the other, from Harry Reid two weeks later, declared it the sense of Congress that "Congress disapproves of the decision of President George W. Bush announced on January 10, 2007, to deploy more than 20,000 additional United States combat troops to Iraq."

Afraid of moving directly to defund the armed forces, Democrats decided on a series of steps that would have the same effect without saying so, i.e., putting so many restrictions and regulations on troop deployments that the number available would in effect be greatly reduced. These would be sponsored by veterans (James Webb and John Murtha), and the stated goal would be to help the armed forces. The real goal, however, was to strangle the surge in its crib. "Top House Democrats, working in concert with antiwar groups, have decided against using congressional power to force a quick end to U.S. involvement . . . and instead will pursue a slow-bleed strategy designed to gradually limit the administration's options," *Politico* reported on February 13, adding that the "goal is to limit or sharply reduce the number of U.S. troops available for the Iraq conflict, rather than to openly cut off funding for the war itself."

At the beginning, it had been made abundantly clear that the surge would take place in stages, that it would build gradually over a three- to five-month period, and would not begin to take full effect until June. This did not stop Reid from declaring in April that the surge had been tried, and had failed. "I believe myself that the secretary of state, the secretary of defense—and you have to make your own decision as to what the president knows—know that this war is lost and that the surge is not accomplishing anything," he said April 19.

Others piled on. "The surge was supposed to bring stability. . . . It hasn't and it won't," Ted Kennedy said on May 1. "The evidence is clear it is not happening and it will not happen," Dodd said May 15 of a potential American victory. Durbin said the day after: "This Senate knows that the administration's policy in Iraq has failed." Senator Joseph Biden agreed. "The surge has not worked and will not work," he said on June 1. And in a joint letter to the president on June 13, Reid and Pelosi said, "As many had foreseen, the escalation has failed to produce the intended results."

Having ordered Petraeus to make a progress report in September, the plan had been to wait until then—and the bad news they seemed sure would be coming—to deliver the coup de grâce. In July, however, the congressional Democrats decided September wouldn't come fast enough. As Harry Reid put it on July 9, "Democrats and military

Et tu?

Harry Reid: "This war is lost, and the surge is not accomplishing anything, as indicated by the extreme violence in Iraq." (April 19, 2007)

Nancy Pelosi: "The escalation has failed to produce the intended results." (With Harry Reid, June 13, 2007)

Ted Kennedy: "The surge was supposed to bring stability. . . . It hasn't and it won't." (May 1, 2007)

Dick Durbin: "By carefully manipulating the statistics, the Bush-Petraeus report will try to persuade us that violence in Iraq is decreasing and thus the surge is working. Even if the figures were right, the conclusion is wrong." (September 7, 2007)

Steny Hoyer: "The American public sees the current direction is not working." (June 29, 2007)

James Webb: "I don't care what the report says next week. I don't care what the report says in September." (July 9, 2007)

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experts and the American people know the president's current strategy is not working and we cannot wait until September to act." As Dianne Feinstein put it, "Today, a majority of the Senate sees that the surge is not working. . . . Do we change course now or do we wait until September? . . . I believe the answer is clear." James Webb, sponsoring an amendment that would cripple the surge, made it clear that whatever Petraeus said wouldn't matter to him. "I don't care what the report says next week. I don't care what the report says in September."

At the end of July, as Congress left town for its midsummer recess, the Democrats took their first blow. An op-ed in the *New York Times* by Kenneth Pollack and Michael O'Hanlon of the Brookings Institution—both men who initially supported the war but had become harsh critics—said they had been to Iraq and seen a substantial change in the climate, and believed for the first time there was hope. (The headline on their piece was even more upbeat: "A War We Just Might Win.") Worse still, some Democrats who went to Iraq over the recess came back and said they had seen signs of progress themselves. While a few Democrats said that what they had seen made them less likely to call for retreat and more likely to give the troops time to accomplish their mission, most proved themselves more than up to the job of putting bad spin on good news.

"Democrats have been forced to recalibrate their own message in the face of recent positive signs on the security front," the *Washington Post* reported on August 22, 2007, "increasingly focusing their criticisms on what those military gains have not achieved." First on the list of things not accomplished was the creation of a strong central government. A pattern was emerging in which goalposts were moved steadily backward with each new accomplishment. First, military success was pronounced unattainable; when it occurred it was called insufficient. When once-hostile Sunni sheikhs begged to join the Shia-led police and armed forces, this too was called meaningless, as long as the "leaders" in Baghdad kept squabbling. Taking their lead from the media, where good news was no news and setbacks always resulted in large, screaming headlines, the war critics pronounced anything that was accomplished unimportant the moment it happened.

Fearful that Petraeus and Ambassador Ryan Crocker might report too much progress in their much-anticipated testimony to Congress in September, Democrats launched a preemptive assault on the duo. "Leading Democrats . . . preemptively assailed the expected findings on Iraq due this week from Gen. David H. Petraeus as 'dead, flat wrong' and said President Bush's likely call for continued patience in the war would simply extend an 'unconscionable' and 'completely unacceptable' policy," reported the *International Herald Tribune* on September 9, two days before the hearing was scheduled. "The pointed comments from the Democrats . . . seemed designed to undercut the impact of the much-awaited reports." Representative Ed Markey of Massachusetts referred to the general's testimony as a "Petraeus village . . . a façade to hide from view the continuing failure of the Bush administration's strategy." Rahm Emanuel said, "We don't need a report that wins the Nobel Prize for creative statistics, or the Pulitzer for fiction." The testimony required the "willing suspension of disbelief," said Hillary Clinton (a past master at the skill, as she had suspended it often enough in regard to her husband). "By carefully manipulating the statistics, the Bush-Petraeus report will try to persuade us that the violence in Iraq is decreasing, and the surge is working," said Dick Durbin. In an unintentional echo of the *New York Times*'s famous "fake but accurate" defense of Dan Rather's fictional documents about President Bush's presumed derelictions of duty in the Texas Air National Guard, Durbin said: "Even if the figures are right, the conclusion is wrong." In less than a year, the Democrats had gone from demanding a change in a policy that was failing, to demanding a change in a policy that hadn't been tried yet, to demanding a change in a policy that at the very least had forestalled disaster and was proving to have some success.

October 2006 was the worst month in Iraq since the war started, with violence spiking all over the country, and death numbers reaching new highs. In November 2006, the Democrats had their best midterm election in 20 years, winning back both the House and the Senate and gaining a large lead in the generic ballot heading into the election of 2008. The two incidents were not unrelated, and, as a result, the party laid down a huge bet on Iraq the Debacle, calculating that the disaster would drive swing voters into their column. "Senator Schumer has shown me numbers that are compelling and astounding," a gleeful Harry Reid said on April 12, 2007, to reporters. "We are going to pick up Senate seats as a result of this war." A poll taken by Fox News in September showed that 19 percent of Democrats thought it would be good for the world if the United States lost in Iraq, and another 20 percent weren't sure either way. The depth of the left's investment in an Iraq defeat came out during the last week in July, when, hearing from General Jack Keane that the surge might be working, Representative Nancy Boyda was so shaken she fled a congressional hearing. "There was only so much that you could take until we in fact had to leave the room for a while," she explained. "Democrats like Boyda would like to preserve in amber the state of public opinion that prevailed during the 2006 election and the first half of this year," noted Michael Barone. "The more cynical among them want to make political gain

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from that; the less cynical want to end a conflict that is taking American lives as fast as they can." Democrats claim that their motives are pure, but it is a strange form of patriotic dissent that attacks a plan as having failed before it has started, anoints a commander, attacks him, and then tries to sandbag his efforts; calls a plan a failure in April when it has been explained many times that it will be June before it can be implemented, and then, when qualified observers see some signs of progress, either collapses in an attack of the vapors or erupts in howls of unrelieved rage.

Since then, the Democrats have moved on to controlling nondamage; i.e., putting the worst face on good news. First, they said military success was impossible; then they said only political success was important; when political success began to happen at the local and provincial levels, they said it was the wrong kind or had come about for all the wrong reasons. When Sunni tribes in Anbar Province turned on al Qaeda and allied themselves with American forces, Chuck Schumer was there to explain it away. "Let me be clear: the violence in Anbar has gone down despite the surge, not because of the surge," Schumer said in early September. "The lack of protection for these tribes from al Qaeda made it clear to these tribes, 'we have to fight al Qaeda ourselves.' It wasn't that the surge brought peace here." Memo to Schumer: (1) Before they turned, the Sunnis of Anbar were fighting *with* al Qaeda against us, not seeking protection from us; (2) Sunnis drove al Qaeda from Anbar in collaboration with American forces; (3) while the Sunnis had been becoming displeased with al Qaeda for some time, it was only when surge-added security made it possible for them to defect without being murdered that they began to come over in droves. Likewise, when casualty rates started falling off drastically among Iraqi citizens, David Obey rose to the occasion, telling a bemused audience at the National Press Club that this was because there was no one left in Iraq to be killed by insurgents.

Earlier this month, when General Petraeus reported that al Qaeda had been cleared out of Baghdad, and when American and Iraqi forces held a unity march in Ramadi (which you surely saw reported in your daily newspapers and newscasts, didn't you?), the Gang That Couldn't Stab Straight announced they would make their 41st effort to force a change of course in the war. Against all the evidence, Reid and Pelosi announced that things in Iraq were now worse than ever. (Translation: We owe it to our base to get this thing throttled, before things improve even more.) "It's not getting better, it's getting worse," Reid intoned solemnly. Other Democrats persisted in claiming against all evidence that Americans were "refereeing a civil war" and continued to demand a "change" in a strategy that exceeded

Joe Biden: "If we continue the way we're going, with the president's failed strategy in Iraq, we're headed for a crash landing." (July 11, 2007)

Rahm Emanuel: "We don't need a report that wins the Nobel Prize for creative statistics, or the Pulitzer for fiction." (September 7, 2007)

Chris Dodd: "A 'surge' of American troops will do nothing." (December 26, 2006)

"The evidence is clear [American military victory] is not happening and it will not happen." (May 15, 2007)

Dianne Feinstein: "Today, a majority of the Senate sees that the surge is not working. . . . Do we change course now or do we wait until September? . . . I believe the answer is clear." (July 17, 2007)

John Murtha: "We can't win militarily." (November 20, 2007)

Jim McDermott: "The truth about September will be that the president is still losing the Iraq war. . . . The Iraq war. . . . is a civil war created by us, and it isn't in America's interest to be there." (June 25, 2007)

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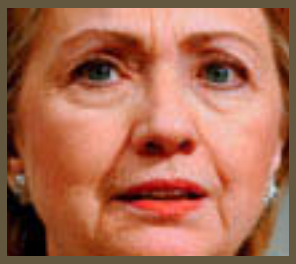

Hillary Clinton to Petraeus: "The reports that you provide to us really require the willing suspension of disbelief." (September 11, 2007)

David Obey: "There are a lot of people who are apparently willing to fight until the last drop of somebody's blood falls. I think it's time for that to stop." (April 19, 2007)

Ben Cardin: "Wait [until Petraeus's September testimony] for what? For new evidence of failure to accumulate?" (July 17, 2007)

John Kerry: "Senator Lugar said a little while ago that he's not confident the president's plan will work. I tell you what: I'm confident it will not work." (January 24, 2007)

Ed Markey: Petraeus's testimony was merely "a façade to hide from view the continuing failure of the Bush administration's strategy." (September 10, 2007)

Bill Richardson: "The surge has led to nothing but a surge in Americans dying." (June 19, 2007)

all expectations. They talked as they had for nearly a year of "peeling off" disaffected Republicans who, if they had not peeled off earlier when things really were dire, were surely not peeling off now.

For the first time, even reporters were starting to giggle. Doubtless this has to do with new polling data, which show views on the war ticking upward from the disastrous nadir of early this year. Though the successes have been underreported, a Pew Research Poll found that 44 percent of Americans think the war is going "very" or "fairly" well, while a CBS poll found the number of Democrats thinking the war was going "very badly" had fallen 12 points (to 45 percent) over three months. According to Charles Franklin, a nonpartisan pollster, "Republicans (including the president) have made real progress in swaying opinion to their side, while 10 months of Democratic efforts have failed to persuade citizens that the war continues to be a disaster. The war of partisan persuasion has tilted towards Republicans and away from the Democrats, at least in this particular aspect," he said on his blog.

Denying reality is seldom sound politics. President Bush is still suffering from the aftereffects of the reality gap of 2006, when he insisted, in the face of mounds of contrary evidence, that things were improving in Iraq when it was clear they were not. The Democrats are now doing the same thing in reverse, closing their minds to all news that is not catastrophic, or, on the rare occasions they admit to a small sign of progress, denying all credit to our strategy, to our leaders, or, worst of all, to our troops. Perhaps what the Democrats really want is for the surge to succeed, but to appear to be failing, at least until the 2008 elections are over. But this seems a fairly hard thing to explain to the public.

As they took control of Congress at the start of 2007, the Democrats vowed this would be a year of historic importance, and it seems they were prescient: Seldom before in the annals of governance have so many politicians fought so long and so hard to completely screw up a winning strategy being waged on their country's behalf. Some cruelly define this as treacherous conduct, but this is imprecise and unkind. They tried, it is true, to do serious damage, but were compromised in the event by their chronic incompetence, as well as by being too above-board and open to try to do things on the sly. A stab in the back as a concept was wholly beyond their capacities. This was not a stab in the back that works via guile and subterfuge. It was 41 different stabs in the front, that always fell far short of serious damage, unless you count the damage they did to their own reputations (the approval ratings for Congress are now in the twenties). It was the Stab in the Front, the Surge-against-the-Surge, the Pickett's Charge of the Great War on Terror. It was a year to remember, that will live in the annals of fecklessness. It was historical. It was hysterical. It was the Stab that Failed. ♦

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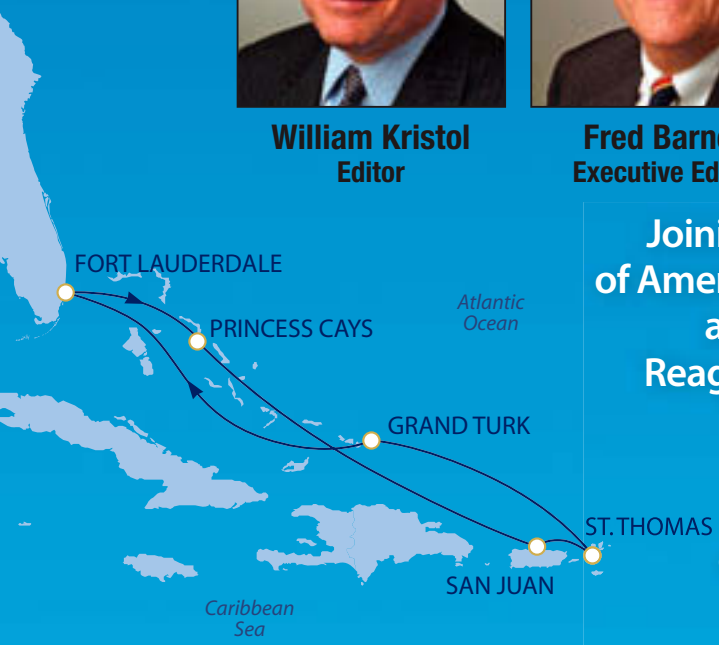

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The End of the Stem Cell Wars

A victory for science, for the pro-life movement, and for President Bush

By Ryan T. Anderson

The stem cell wars are over. Leading scientists are telling us that they can pursue the most promising stem cell research without using—much less killing—human embryos. This breakthrough enables researchers to create human embryonic stem cells directly from adult cells. In fact, the new method may actually prove superior to embryo-destructive alternatives. This is the biggest stem cell advance since James Thomson became the first scientist to isolate embryonic stem cells, less than a decade ago.

It is a new study by Thomson himself that has caused the present stir, but this time Thomson is not alone. Accounts of independent research by two separate teams of scientists were published on November 20—one in the journal *Cell* and one in the journal *Science*—documenting the production of pluripotent human stem cells without using embryos or eggs or cloning or any morally questionable method at all.

The new technique is so promising that on November 16, Ian Wilmut announced that he would no longer seek to clone humans. Wilmut, you may remember, is the scientist who cloned Dolly the sheep. He recently sought and received a license from the British government to attempt to clone human embryos for research purposes. Now, citing the new technique, he has abandoned his plans.

It was only in 1998 that Thomson succeeded in isolating human embryonic stem cells. Though other types of human stem cells were known at the time (some were even in clinical trials), embryonic stem cells were thought to be the holy grail because they were believed to be more flexible. They were "pluripotent"—capable, in theory, of developing into any type of body tissue—whereas so-called adult stem cells were thought to be useful for forming a narrower range of tissue types. The problem with producing embryonic stem cells was that human embryos—nascent human beings—had to be destroyed in the process.

Even now, nine years later, embryonic stem cells are thought by many scientists to have greater potential than other types. This reputation persists even though adult stem cells are already used in therapies to treat several diseases and are being tested in hundreds of clinical trials, while not a single embryonic stem cell therapy exists, even in trials.

As anyone familiar with reparative medicine knows, immune rejection is one of the tallest hurdles to clear. The promise of cloning was that therapies could be produced using human embryos cloned directly from the patient—thus resulting in a genetic match. Cloning, it was said, would also provide an unlimited supply of human embryos. But many people thought human cloning with the sole intention to kill crossed an ethical line. In addition, human cloning would require an enormous number of human eggs—which could be obtained only by subjecting donors to painful and potentially dangerous hormonal-stimulation procedures. The fear was that likely "donors" would be poor women undergoing a distasteful procedure solely for the fee.

On August 9, 2001, President Bush waded into this morass. He issued an executive order that opened human embryonic stem cell research to federal funding for the first time ever. The order also restricted that funding, however, to research using existing embryonic stem cell lines: No more embryos would be created and destroyed for taxpayer-funded research. (Contrary to popular belief, Bush's order did not *ban* anything.) Opposition was fierce, but Bush stood firm.

Amid this controversy, a number of scientists discussed possible alternative sources of embryonic stem cells. William Hurlbut, a professor at Stanford and a member of the President's Council on Bioethics, proposed Altered Nuclear Transfer, a process that produced nonembryonic tumor-like

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entities that could then be harvested for the equivalent of embryonic stem cells. Some ethicists weren't fully sold, fearing that the tumor-like entities might be deformed embryos. Hurlbut's proposal was then modified, using oocyte cytoplasm to directly reprogram a cell's nucleus to make it pluripotent. Still, some critics were unconvinced. Finally, using mice, a Japanese scientist, Shinya Yamanaka, showed that he could create embryonic stem cells directly from adult cells, and within less than a year his study was replicated and significantly expanded by two separate research groups. Yamanaka went to work to make it happen with human cells.

But outside the scientific community, conventional wisdom held that these alternative sources, while interesting, were being proposed only to provide Bush with political cover during the waning years of his presidency. As soon as a new president was inaugurated, federal funds would flow into human cloning and embryo-destructive research. Or so the story went.

That expectation has now been shattered. Whether or not the next president shares Bush's pro-life convictions, it is highly unlikely that taxpayer funds will go to support embryo destruction, which has become not only unnecessary but also less efficient than the alternatives. That's the story coming out of *Cell* and *Science*.

Outside the scientific community, conventional wisdom held that alternative stem cell sources were being proposed only to provide Bush with political cover. That expectation has now been shattered.

Ian Wilmut, top; James Thomson

REUTERS

In *Cell*, Yamanaka announces that the pluripotent stem cell-producing technique he used on mouse cells works with human cells. The resulting cells—called induced pluripotent stem cells, or iPS cells—are functionally identical to human embryonic stem cells: They possess all of the same properties. The difference is simply in the method of their production.

This new production technique is possible because the difference between a stem cell and an adult cell is not a matter of genetics but of epigenetics: which genes are expressed, how, and to what degree. Different cells have the same genes, expressed differently. So scientists had been searching for a way to remodel the gene expression of adult cells to transform them into stem cells. Yamanaka's team discovered a collection of four genes—Oct3/4, Sox2, Klf4, and c-Myc—that does precisely this. When introduced into adult cells, these genes directly reprogram the cells to a pluripotent state.

I asked Maureen Condic, professor of neurobiology and anatomy at the University of Utah School of Medicine, about these cells. "Direct reprogramming of adult cells to pluripotent stem cells is one of the most significant scientific findings of the last quarter century," she said. "This approach holds tremendous promise for advancing our scientific understanding of stem cells and for advancing the study of regenerative medicine. However, there are concerns regarding the safety of iPS cells for human therapies, due to the use of viral vectors that integrate into the cell's DNA, potentially causing dangerous mutations, and to the use of c-Myc, a gene that is associated with some forms of human cancer."

Yamanaka himself notes these pitfalls, but indicates that they should be surmountable: His technique works even when you take c-Myc out of the mix and use only the other three genes (though it achieves its results at a less efficient rate). Moreover, Yamanaka notes that integration of the virus into the DNA will not reduce the usefulness of induced pluripotent stem cells for study of human diseases in the laboratory, and that other nonviral means of introducing the reprogramming factors into cells are likely to be sufficient to generate iPS cells.

The Thomson approach described in *Science* avoided some of these drawbacks by using no c-Myc and optimizing the safety of the induced pluripotent stem cells from the start. His team used a different group of genes—Oct4, Sox2, Nanog, and Lin28—to achieve the

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same end: direct reprogramming of adult human cells to the pluripotent state. Thomson's technique is also noteworthy because it uses a lentivirus to introduce the gene group, which is the safest of retroviral integration methods. Work still needs to be done to ensure that viral vectors do not introduce dangerous mutations, but the scientists I spoke with thought this would be achievable with minimal delay.

What does all of this mean? James Thomson explains it best in his *Science* paper:

> The human iPS cells described here meet the defining criteria we originally proposed for human embryonic stem cells, with the significant exception that the iPS cells are not derived from embryos. Similar to human embryonic stem cells, human iPS cells should prove useful for studying the development and function of human tissues, for discovering and testing new drugs, and for transplantation medicine. For transplantation therapies based on these cells, with the exception of autoimmune diseases, patient-specific iPS cell lines should largely eliminate the concern of immune rejection.

In short: The new technique produces patient-specific stem cells with all the benefits of stem cells from embryos, but without the production and destruction of human embryos or the use of human eggs.

Because induced pluripotent stem cells, created from a patient's own body, are a perfect genetic match, they should prove especially useful for both the study of diseases and the development of treatments. Thomson notes, "For drug development, human iPS cells should make it easier to generate panels of cell lines that more closely reflect the genetic diversity of a population, and should make it possible to generate cell lines from individuals predisposed to specific diseases."

Wilmut, of Dolly the sheep fame, agrees. Comparing his cloning methods with Yamanaka's, he said, "The work which was described from Japan of using a technique to change cells from a patient directly into stem cells without making an embryo has got so much more potential."

Nonetheless, there are serious challenges to overcome before pluripotent stem cells—whatever their source—will be ready for clinical therapies. All pluripotent stem cells carry a risk of tumor formation. And no one has yet figured out how to convert these stem cells into transplantable cells usable for therapies. Markus Grompe, professor in the department of molecular and medical genetics at the Oregon Health and Science University, director of the Oregon Stem Cell Center, and a board member of the International Society for Stem Cell Research, told me that "the therapeutic potential of all human pluripotent stem cells, including those generated by direct reprogramming, remains uncertain. No immediate cures should be expected from human pluripotent stem cell-based therapy, either embryo-derived or iPSC. First, the tumor risk of such cells must be harnessed, and second, the efficient conversion to transplantable cells must be mastered."

But scientists are hopeful that these hurdles will be overcome. Grompe points out that stem cells have important uses beyond therapy, and for these uses, too,

> iPS cells are clearly superior to embryo-derived stem cells. They can be used to study how human organs and tissues form. And the insights gained are likely to lead to the development of new drugs and strategies to benefit human health. Direct reprogramming techniques make it possible to generate pluripotent cells from specific individuals with particular diseases. For example, it will be possible to make pluripotent stem cells from children with Fanconi's anemia, a devastating genetic disease, and study the effects of candidate drugs on the formation of human blood. Another example, favored by Ian Wilmut, is motor neuron disease (Lou Gehrig's disease). Here it will be of interest to examine the formation of nerves and motor neurons from patients with the actual disease, in an attempt to discover ways to help the cells survive and function better. These kinds of experiments are now immediately possible and will likely be the first application of iPS cells.

Thus, iPS cells may very well help us discover therapies for some of the most daunting genetic diseases. And they should be able to do so at last without controversy.

The ethicists I spoke with had only praise for the new developments. While some Catholic moral theologians had previously worried that reprogramming methods "mimicked conception" and might produce disabled embryos, the new technique should alleviate all fears. Concerns that scientists might "go too far back" and reprogram a cell to a totipotent stage—making an actual embryo, not a stem cell—are quickly settled once one understands the science. To be an embryo requires not only a particular nuclear state, but also certain organizational factors that the oocyte cytoplasm provides. But no egg or cytoplasm is used in this method. Furthermore, two of the genes used for reprogramming—Nanog and Sox2—are never found in embryos, only in stem cells. Their expression in reprogramming precludes totipotency.

When I asked Father Thomas Berg, the executive director of the Westchester Institute for Ethics and the Human Person, about this concern, he replied, "From a Catholic perspective, reprogramming clears the bar in terms of reasonable concern for human dignity in biotech research: Never at any point in the process of reprogramming is there ever a danger of involving—even accidentally we might say—techniques that could bring about a human embryo, as would happen in cloning. The science of pluripotent stem cell research can move forward toward therapies and cures in a manner that is free of any ethical concerns."

What about all of those antiscience religious fanatics

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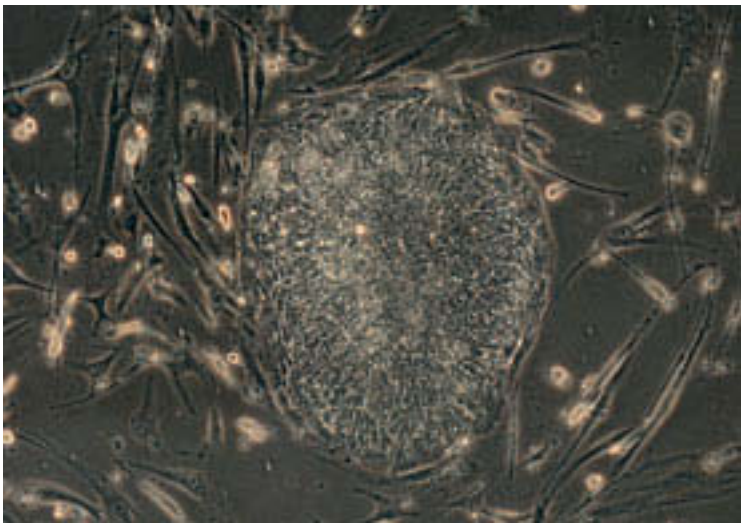
who used to scold about "playing God"? They don't exist. They're a media-conjured fantasy. Of all the many people I have talked with about stem cells, none has ever expressed any antiscience or antimedicine inclinations.

Princeton's legal philosopher Robert P. George, who also serves on the President's Council on Bioethics, told me, "From the beginning we have been arguing that we must do everything we can to advance the cause of stem cell science but without sacrificing our respect for nascent human life and the principle of the inherent and equal dignity of each and every member of the human family. This latest news just goes to show that it really is possible."



A skin cell reprogrammed into a pluripotent stem cell by James Thomson and colleagues at the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

JUNYING YU/AFP / GETTY IMAGES

It also is illustrative of the politics of science. Had a President Gore or a President Kerry allowed the science to go forward without regard for moral principle, it would have set a terrible precedent. A Gore or Kerry presidency would have bestowed federal blessing and taxpayer funds on laboratory work predicated on the assumption that embryonic human beings can be treated as spare parts and that cloning to kill is acceptable.

But because President Bush stood his ground, we have avoided that moral catastrophe. Had Bush lost either election, or had he caved to pressure from those who slandered him as "antiscience," it is very possible that the new method of stem cell production—the new gold standard, in all likelihood—would never have been found. Most likely, science and the public would have accommodated themselves to the mass production and mass killing of human embryos.

Indeed, it is not Bush alone, but the entire pro-life movement, that has been vindicated. For the petition-signers and the direct-mail organizers, the philosophers and the scientists who have defended the sanctity of human life, the *Cell* and *Science* stories come as a reward. When I spoke with Robert George, he praised Leon Kass, the former chairman of the President's Council, together with William Hurlbut, as the driving intellectual force against embryo-killing and in favor of finding alternative methods of obtaining pluripotent stem cells. "All along," George reports, "it was Dr. Kass who said that reprogramming methods would, if pursued vigorously, enable us to realize the full benefits of stem cell science while respecting human dignity."

George downplays his own role in shaping the president's thinking. After Congress passed a bill funding embryo-destructive stem cell research, Bush sought counsel. His approval ratings were in the cellar, and the general public largely supported the bill. Shortly before announcing his response to the legislation, the president invited George and Grompe to the Oval Office to discuss it with him. George presented the scientific and philosophical case for respecting the human embryo, while Grompe assured the president that alternatives such as reprogramming, if given time, would win the day. The president agreed and announced his veto. He was right.

And Congress was wrong. Considering the realities of Washington, it is no surprise that the pro-embryo-destruction forces in the House of Representatives actually teamed up to defeat a bill that would have funded research on reprogramming, which they dismissed as a distraction. President Bush then issued another executive order, this one instructing the National Institutes of Health to promote reprogramming research. As it turns out, the breakthrough Thomson study was partially funded by NIH.

Stem cell research wasn't a prime issue during the 2000 campaign. Politically, the controversy wasn't yet ripe, though it became so just months into Bush's first term. Similarly, now, we don't know what the next biotech breakthrough will be. Whatever it is, we can be certain that some people will demand we pursue it. Having political leaders of principle who insist on ethical standards in scientific research, then, is always of the utmost importance.

At present, people on all sides of the old stem cell debate should be able to celebrate. The recent news gives scientists a better method of producing embryonic stem cells while retaining our nation's commitment to the equal and inherent dignity of all human beings. Richard Doerflinger of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops pointed out the happy irony: "The scientist who gave us human embryonic stem cell research has helped find the way to go beyond embryo-destructive research, and in response to these new findings, the scientist who gave us cloning tells us that the cloning agenda is on the way to being obsolete." ♦

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Read, Weep, and Vote

A bookshelf of 'writing' from the presidential candidates

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

Is the traditional campaign book dead? Several weeks ago, for reasons I'm not entirely clear about, I found myself sitting alone in my office with (a) a stack of books written by this season's presidential candidates, and (b) too much time on my hands. The question dogged me as I sifted through the pile.

Books by presidential candidates are not worthless; they are hurriedly written by hired hacks filling page after page with dim reminiscence and stultifying platitude, sure. But read right, despite themselves, they often carry information about our present politics that's hard to capture elsewhere. Sometimes the information is coded, sometimes it's as plain as the type on the page.

The first campaign book I recall reading came out in 1975, a memoir ironically titled *Why Not the Best?* by Jimmy Carter. Carter's book was premonitory: In one place a discerning reader could find the pointless, free-floating moralism, the bitterness over professional failure, the Faulknerian family, the scrupulosity, the tendency to envy and recrimination that made the Carter presidency so interesting. From every page the memoir seemed to cry, *Caveat lector*. If only more Americans spoke Latin!

By the time Carter sought reelection four years later, there were already too many *Why Not the Worst?* jokes going around to risk a reissue of the book. Instead, 1980 was defined by the publication of a special gala edition of Ronald Reagan's 1965 Hollywood autobiography (*Where's the Rest of Me?*), one of the few books ever to combine stern warnings about the dangers of International Communism and the sinister intentions of the Soviet Union with winsome anecdotes about Errol Flynn. By 1988, in a development that only a reader of his book might have foreseen, Reagan had dealt International Communism a death blow by, among other things, boring the leader of the Soviet Union with endless stories about Errol Flynn.

Promises to Keep
On Life and Politics
by Joe Biden
Random House, 400 pp., $25.95

Home
The Blueprints of Our Lives
by John Edwards
Collins, 176 pp., $29.95

It Takes a Village
Tenth Anniversary Edition
by Hillary Rodham Clinton
Simon & Schuster, 352 pp., $25

From Hope to Higher Ground
12 STOPs to Restoring America's Greatness
by Mike Huckabee
Center Street, 208 pp., $19.99

Turnaround
Crisis, Leadership, and the Olympic Games
by Mitt Romney
Regnery, 416 pp., $27.95

Letters from Nuremberg
My Father's Narrative of a Quest for Justice
by Christopher Dodd
With Lary Bloom
Crown, 384 pp., $25.95

Later that year, after the major parties had selected their presidential nominees, communism was nearly finished and so was Reaganism. Sensing (wrongly, as it happened) that the electorate was ready for change, the candidates broke explicitly with the past and used their campaign books to cast themselves as forward-lookers. George H.W. Bush published an autobiography called, appropriately enough, *Looking Forward*, while his opponent, Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis, published *Creating the Future*, which described innovative strategies for improved income-tax collection, the use of quasi-governmental entities in generating capital for corporate start-ups, and adjusting admission standards for job-training programs to make them more flexible and cost-effective over the long term. Together with his two earlier books—one on solar energy, published by the Massachusetts Solar Action Office, and another on zoning, published by the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy—*Creating the Future* established that Dukakis was too tedious to be elected president.

And so on. The discerning reader of a campaign book digs into a spillage of entrails that professional soothsayers in the press often ignore. As you can see, campaign books usually come in one of two styles. There's the policy book or the memoir, and sometimes a blending of the two. Which type of

Andrew Ferguson, a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is the author, most recently, of* Land of Lincoln: Adventures in Abe's America.

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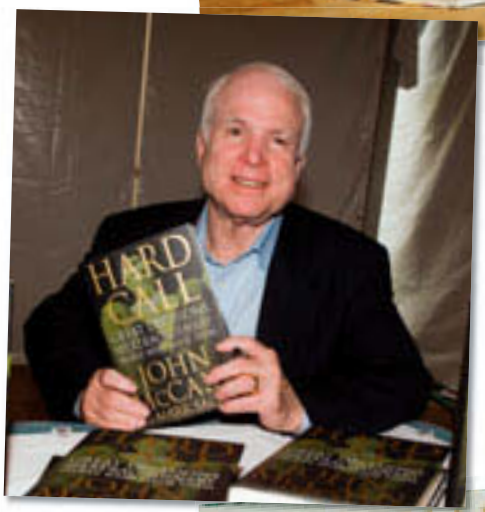
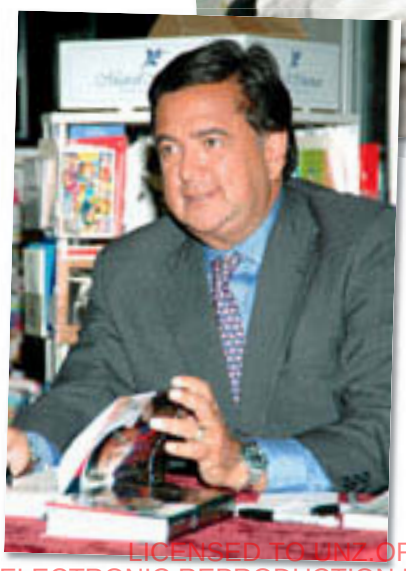
book the candidate chooses can itself be illuminating: In 1996, Bill Clinton published a book of policy ideas called *Between Hope and History*, hoping to deflect attention from his problematic personal qualities; his opponent, Bob Dole, demonstrated his admirable personal qualities in a memoir called *Unlimited Partners: Our American Story*, deflecting attention from his problematic lack of policy ideas.

Looking over the stack here in my office the other day, I realized how few of this year's campaign books fit these conventional molds. The candidates continue to scribble and publish, scribble and publish, but the genre has changed—almost disappeared, in fact. Only two of the books in my stack would be recognizable as traditional campaign book along the lines of *Why Not the Best?* or *Between Hope and History*. One of these traditional books is by Sam Brownback, who since publishing *From Power to Purpose* has dropped from the race and no longer need concern us, ever. The other is by Joe Biden, who as of this week is still among the active Democratic candidates. He has published *Promises to Keep*, a nearly flawless specimen of the traditional campaign book—as perfect as the whitened teeth and Photoshop-blue eyes that gleam from the portrait on the cover.



What does a discerning reader learn from Biden's book that we didn't already know? Perhaps not much, if you're a regular watcher of C-SPAN or a longtime resident of Delaware. But there is something unforgettable about watching the man emerge on the page. His legendary self-regard becomes more impressive when the reader sees it in typescript, undistracted by the smile and the hair plugs. Biden quotes at great length from letters of recommendation he received as a young man, when far-sighted professors wrote movingly of his "sharp and incisive intellect" and his "highly developed sense of responsibility." These qualities have proved to be more of a burden than you might think, Biden admits. "I've made life difficult for myself," he writes, "by putting intellectual consistency and personal principle above expediency."



Yes, many Biden fans might tag these as the greatest of his gifts. Biden himself isn't so sure. After a little hemming and hawing—is it his intelligence that he most admires, or his commitment to principle, or his insistence on calling 'em as he sees 'em, or what?—he decides that his greatest personal and political virtue is probably his *integrity*. Tough call. But his wife seems to agree. He recounts one difficult episode in which she said as much.

> "Of all the things to attack you on," she said, almost in tears. "Your integrity?"

This lachrymose moment came during Biden's aborted presidential campaign in 1988, when reporters discovered several instances of plagiarism in his campaign speeches and in his law school record. Biden rehearses the episode in tormenting, if selective, detail, and true to campaign-book form, his account serves as the emotional center of the book. The memoir of every presidential candidate must describe a Political Time of Testing, some point at which, if the narrative arc is to prove satisfying, the hero encounters criticism, most of it unjust, but then rallies, overcomes hardship and misfortune and the petty, self-serving attacks of enemies, and emerges chastened but wiser—and, come to think of it, more qualified to lead the greatest nation on earth.

In Biden's case, the ritual also allows him to dismiss these old charges by placing them in the least clarifying light possible. It's true that he was disciplined for plagiarizing a paper in law school, he says offhandedly; but those long paragraphs taken verbatim from other people's work were simply an oversight—a matter of not knowing how to cite sources properly. (A fun-loving student, he had skipped the class in which the rules

CLINTON, BOB DAEMMRICH / CORBIS; MCCAIN, LYNN GOLDSMITH / CORBIS; RICHARDSON, STEVE SNOWDEN / GETTY IMAGES; OBAMA, DAVID BRABYN / CORBIS

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of citation were taught.) As for the lines he'd lifted from others and dropped into his own speeches—these were misunderstandings. In at least one instance, a speechwriter had inserted a quote from Bobby Kennedy into Biden's speech without attribution, meaning that while Biden was delivering remarks he knew he hadn't written, he was also delivering remarks that he didn't know his speechwriter hadn't written.

It's confusing, yes, but Biden's explanations serve a dual purpose: He appears forthright even as he tries to bury once and for all the accusations that forced him from presidential contention 20 years ago. Now, officially, they are "old news," the settled stuff of history and memoir. To any detailed questions about them that might arise from young reporters covering his current campaign, he can say: Just read my book.

That's a lot to ask, however. Like most conventional campaign books, *Promises to Keep* is so light in tone, so breezily written, that it becomes, paradoxically, extremely difficult to read. Its superficiality and general insincerity may explain why the traditional campaign book has become a dying genre. In the stack in my office, none of the other campaign books looks like a campaign book. They look like everything *but* campaign books. I've got a self-help manual, a business book, a sociological tract—nowadays, a candidate will do whatever it takes to disguise his campaign book. It's as if our politicians, knowing the low regard in which the public holds them and their craft, feel they can only advance their politics by stealth. This lays yet another complication onto what is already a slippery business.

Yet it also makes for a pleasing variety of disguises. I've even got a coffee-table book here, an album of photographs edited by John Edwards. You're probably thinking: *Of course* the most photogenic presidential candidate since John Kennedy would publish a book of photographs. But these aren't photos of Edwards, they're pictures of houses, lots and lots of houses. *Home: The Blueprints of Our Lives* collects brief reminiscences about childhood homes to go along with the pictures. The contributors are a cross-section of America. They come from movies (Steven Spielberg, Benicio Del Toro, Danny Glover), TV (Star Jones), fashion (Vera Wang), pop music (John Mellencamp), pop religion (Rick Warren), and sports (Sugar Ray Leonard). There are a dozen nobodies included, too, for balance.

Home is a strange book for a presidential candidate to be associated with, or so it seems at first glance. After all, by Anglo-American tradition, the family home is the place where politics ends, the bulwark against government meddlers and their schemes for uplift and improvement. Thus, *Home* is Oprah-like in its soft, trans-ideological inoffensiveness. It's a Hallmark card to the joys of nonpartisan domesticity. "Home is family," writes Edwards's ghostwriter in the introduction. "Home is safety. Home is faith." Home is also a place of sentence fragments: "Where we learn to dream. Where we become who we are. And where we can always return."

And then you catch glimmers of the Two Americas that Edwards once made the theme of his presidential quest: There's the America of Vera Wang's shingled mansion in Pound Ridge, New York, where the rest of us are eaten alive by real estate envy; and there's the America of the rat trap that Star Jones grew up in, where we thank God we weren't born Star Jones. Edwards neglects to tell us which America he lives in by omitting any photos of his own current home, a 28,000-square foot compound built on 102 acres outside Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Home, for Edwards, is not only faith, not just safety, not merely family; it's also a 15,000-square-foot attached gym with a basketball court, a squash court, two stages, a caretaker's suite, a locker room, and an indoor pool. And a four-car garage. No wonder he likes homes so much.

So what's the point of all this cloth-bound coziness? The reader will likely be puzzled until he reaches the Acknowledgments, where Edwards mentions that the idea for the book came from Harrison Hickman. He doesn't mention that Hickman is his pollster. *Home* is a book of, by, and for a focus group: reassuringly fuzzy, harmlessly populist, mandatorily multicultural. And as with all high-concept advertising, it carries a subliminal message. *Home* serves as one politician's warning to voters who might hope for a limit on his ambitions for "giving government back to the people." Lock your doors if you want, he seems to be saying; go ahead and draw those blinds, retreat to the bulwark if you dare. But the gates of Home will not prevail against my plans to make your life wonderful.

Edwards is credited as editor of *Home* rather than its author, and he acknowledges the help of several others in the actual editing of the book, suggesting for the first time in the history of campaign books the existence of hired ghost*editors*. If you're like me, when you read books by politicians you get distracted by the question of who actually wrote them. Americans are far past the point where we expect our statesmen to sweat through an effort to discover and assemble and refine their thoughts by putting them into their own words. For this reason, and this reason only, I was happy to find in my stack a new copy of Hillary Clinton's famous bestseller, *It Takes a Village*, revised, updated, and reissued in a special anniversary edition to coincide with her presidential campaign, by which she seeks to take over the whole village.

Like Castro, like Ceausescu, like many other politicians, Mrs. Clinton prefers to be photographed surrounded by schoolchildren, an image that suggests either a kid's birth-

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day party or a hostage situation, depending on your point of view. I got past the cover photo, with its army of youngsters and Mrs. Clinton's mandible-cracking smile, to search through the actual text, in hopes of finding some mention of Barbara Feinman who, in addition to other professional accomplishments, wrote the book. A decade ago, when *Village* was first published, Feinman was much talked about for having gone unmentioned.

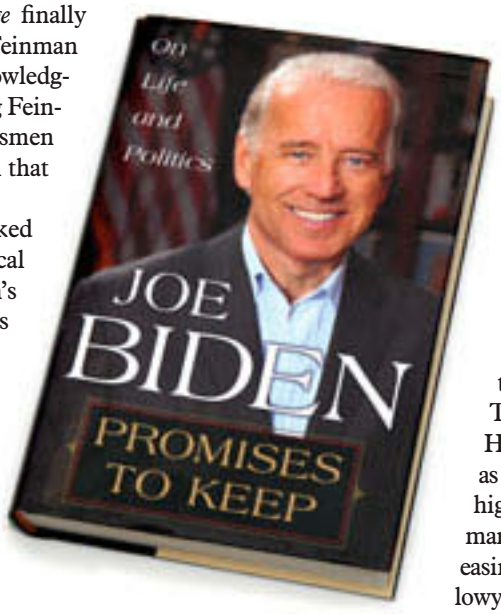
Shortly before the book came out, Mrs. Clinton boasted of having "written a 320-page book in longhand over the last six months." This came as a surprise to her ghostwriter. Feinman had often worked late nights at the White House and even followed Mrs. Clinton on vacation in hope of picking up stray thoughts she could use to bulk up the manuscript, and she had been assured her role as ghost would be generously acknowledged. Yet when *Village* finally appeared there was no mention of Feinman either on the cover or in the Acknowledgments. News stories appeared detailing Feinman's role, but White House spokesmen backed the first lady in her contention that the book was her work alone.

It became a minor controversy, stoked not only by Mrs. Clinton's political adversaries but also by Feinman's friends in the Washington press corps (she's a former researcher for Bob Woodward). With Mrs. Clinton's claims of sole authorship long ago disproved, I picked up this expanded edition of *Village* to see whether she had expanded it enough to make room for Barbara Feinman. Nope: Mrs. Clinton still believes that while it takes a village to raise a child, it takes nobody worth naming to write her book for her.

We are left, unhappily, with the book itself, turgid and sanctimonious. It remains what its author called it in a speech a few years ago: "At best a mediocre political tract on the virtues of governmental responsibility in the raising of children." I'm quoting Barbara Feinman, of course, not Mrs. Clinton. Anyway, the episode is worth recalling, and *Village* is worth keeping at hand, as another instance of the creepy, and often self-defeating, pettiness that marks every phase of the Clintons' public life.

The question of authorship adds some interest to another not-a-campaign-book, this one by Mrs. Clinton's fellow Arkansan, the former governor Mike Huckabee. Huckabee takes special care to assert that he wrote his own book from start to finish: "I don't do well giving someone else's speeches or publishing a book I didn't actually write." Why, then, does *From Hope to Higher Ground* still have the feather-light feel of a ghostwritten product? The answer is simple: Huckabee himself once made a living as a freelance ghostwriter—the Barbara Feinman of the Ozarks. Now, having written books under his own name, he has realized the ghostwriter's fondest dream. All he needs to do next is get elected president of the United States, and he'll be a happy fellow.

He still has the technique of a ghostwriter. Professionally, a ghostwriter works at a terrible disadvantage. As a hired laborer, he is cut off from the taproot of what makes a regular book interesting: the writer's own inspiration, concern, and experience. All the ghostwriter can do is rely on what his employer says he, the employer, wants to say. And since the employer is unlikely to be expressive or articulate (or else he wouldn't need a ghostwriter), the ghostwriter will strain to make the book interesting by artificial means. This is why so many ghostwritten books hang on the use of impersonal gimmicks, with lots of lists, bullet points, graphics, tips, potted third-person anecdotes, aphorisms, and changes in typeface.



The habit must be hard to shake. The ghostwriter-turned-governor-turned-writer has built his book around a series of gimmicks. The purpose, again, is disguise: He wants his campaign manifesto to look like a self-help book. The unfortunate, pun-crippled subtitle—*12 STOPs to Restoring America's Greatness*—makes the intention clear. ("1. STOP Being Cynical; 2. STOP Thinking Horizontally; 3. STOP Cheating Our Children.") The hortatory tone comes naturally to Huckabee, who in addition to his time as a ghostwriter and governor was also a highly successful Baptist pastor. Like so many contemporary divines, he is skilled at easing evangelical Christianity into the pillowy idiom of pop therapy. With his book, Huckabee is betting that he can do the same with right-wing politics.

But it's a bad fit—so uncomfortable that, sooner or later, one or the other, the right-wingery or the therapy, has to cry uncle; and almost always it's the therapeutic approach that triumphs. "I'm a conservative," he writes, who believes in "lower taxes, less government, personal empowerment, personal ownership, and personal responsibility." His book is the work of a buttinski, however—a busybody in overdrive. There is no sphere of other people's lives that he doesn't have elaborate theories about how to manage. Anyone who follows Governor Huckabee's STOPs will find his energy, if not his income, sorely taxed. Each of the twelve STOPs has twelve "action steps." That's 144 steps to go with the STOPs:

*"Write letters of praise to total strangers you read about who do wonderful things";

*"Watch classic films made before 1968";

*"Keep your car maintained and serviced for better fuel efficiency";

*"Sign up for a Citizen's Police Academy";

*"Attend meetings of your city council or local county government";

BOOK PHOTOS: LEV NISNEVITCH

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*"Eat five servings a day minimum of fruits and vegetables";

*"If your state has a lottery, ask for a breakdown of revenues, expenditures, and winnings, and compare inflation-adjusted dollars spent by the state before and after the lottery."

Sure thing. And should we file it in triplicate, gov? The STOP steps are exhausting. And expensive:

*"Try to find and enjoy organic or natural foods and grass-fed beef raised on a self-sustaining farm."

Pundits tell us that Huckabee knows he has only the slimmest chance of being nominated for president. What he really wants, they say, is the vice presidential nomination. I don't think so. I've read his book, and what he really wants is a spot on the bill with Zig Ziglar's "Strategies for Success" tour. By this time next year he'll have it.

He may have to fight for it, though. By this time next year Mitt Romney may be broke and eager for the money that a Ziglar tour would bring. Motivating and inspiring America's mid-level corporate managers is clearly among the goals of Romney's not-a-campaign-book, *Turnaround: Crisis, Leadership, and the Olympic Games*. He also tries to make the case that his success as a venture capitalist and president of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City makes him a terrific, as he might say, candidate for president.

Mitt Romney's *Turnaround* looks like a business book, reads like a business book, and is as boring as a business book, stomped flat by excruciating accounts of sales pitches, budget meetings, brainstorming sessions, PowerPoint presentations, and marketing strategies.

Turnaround looks like a business book, reads like a business book, and is as boring as a business book, stomped flat by excruciating accounts of sales pitches, budget meetings, brainstorming sessions, PowerPoint presentations, and marketing strategies. The dream that a businessman might someday seize the reins of American government and force it to work according to the most American of pursuits—making money—is apparently eternal. Over the last 20 years the public's bizarre flirtations with Lee Iacocca, Ross Perot, and Peter Ueberroth have attested to the dream's appeal.

Turnaround is Romney's bid to exploit this frustrated and misguided constituency himself. Just as Huckabee would like to squeeze politics into the categories of pop therapy, Romney hopes to apply the principles of corporate management to politics: "At All Costs, Protect the Brand." "Never Underestimate the Value of Your Product." "Rivalry Breeds Interest." "Communicate the Vision." "Challenge the Team to Stretch." There are a dozen more. If they worked for Romney, they can work for you—and for America. It also helps if you look like Bob Barker.

Looking at my stack as it dwindled, I was struck by how cleverly the campaign books have been disguised. A campaign book is a bad book to begin with, and none of these is the worse for masquerading as something else; the authors don't necessarily deserve the accusation of bad faith for their subterfuge. The single exception I find is at the bottom of my stack, figuratively and literally.

Christopher Dodd wants us to think of his *Letters from Nuremberg* as a work of history. His father, Thomas Dodd, worked as a prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals after World War II, and the book gathers the letters Thomas wrote during the trials to his wife, back home with their kids in Connecticut. The letters are love letters, which lends them personal charm, but they are also full of news, quick sketches of the criminals and the men who worked to bring them to justice, which lends historical interest. Under other circumstances, the book might have been a small but rewarding addition to the literature of the war.

But Dodd lets the mask slip. He'd waited for years, he writes in an introduction, for just the right time to publish his father's letters. That time happily coincided with his own decision to run for president. His father's words, says the son, are suddenly urgent because they form a kind of anticipatory indictment of the current Republican administration in its fight against Islamic terrorists.

"For six decades, we learned the lesson of the Nuremberg men and women well," Dodd writes. "We continued to stand for the right things. [He doesn't really believe this, by the way, since as a public figure Christopher Dodd has tried to derail the foreign policies of the Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Bush I administrations. No matter. He's after bigger game now.] But that has changed in the past few years," he continues. "If, for sixty years, a single word, *Nuremberg*, has best captured America's moral authority and commitment to justice, unfortunately, another word now captures the loss of such authority and commitment: *Guantánamo*."

The moral dislocation created by this cheesy equivalence—comparing the treatment of defeated enemies at the close of one war with the treatment of dangerous combatants in the midst of another—seems almost pathological. It isn't, though. It's just political—the result of Dodd's desperate attempt to use anything at hand to gratify the ambition that gnaws at him. In any case, it has nothing to do with history and everything to do with Christopher Dodd's presidential campaign.

Repellent as it is, I suppose we can take some reassurance from *Letters from Nuremberg*, especially those of us who manage to acquire a stack of campaign books every four years. The puffery, the opportunism, the ambition are all unconquerable. We shouldn't be fooled by the variety of its infinite forms—tract or memoir, history or picture book, self-help manual or businessman's guide to climbing the greasy pole. The genre endures and retains its value.

Even politicians, even their ghostwriters, can't kill the campaign book. ♦

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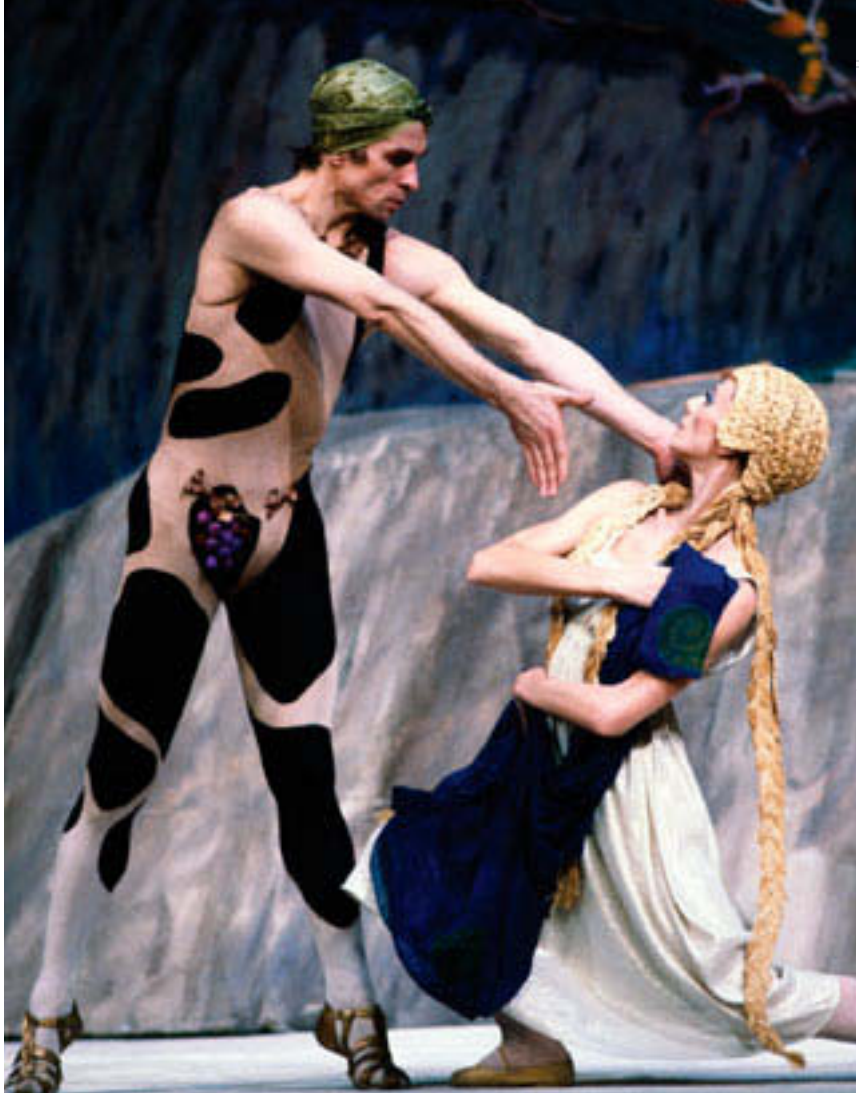

Rudolf Nureyev and Dominique Khalfouni in 'Afternoon of a Faun,' 1982

CORBIS SYGMA

Prancing Rudy

The artist of the dance. **BY PIA CATTON**

Superlatives and extremes have barely enough power when describing the life of Rudolf Nureyev. He studied ballet with the best teachers at the most influential school, the Vaganova Academy, in a country ruled by one of history's cruelest regimes. To escape it, he chose defection, a life-altering decision that ruined the lives of his loved ones in Russia. He was one of the 20th century's sexiest men, with an insatiable appetite for life and love. And his unchecked, often offensive personality made him a polarizing public figure.

Nureyev
The Life
by Julie Kavanagh
Pantheon, 782 pp., $37.50

While all of this leads to dramatic, titillating stories, what really matters is that Nureyev was among the greatest ballet dancers of all time. When he came to the West, he voraciously absorbed as many different styles of dance as he could—and in so doing, had a lasting, worldwide effect on ballet. It is this artistic give-and-take that his authorized biographer, Julie Kavanagh, emphasizes with diligent, fascinating detail here—though, it should be said, there is also plenty of the juicy stuff, too.

Almost immediately after his 1961 defection in Paris, Nureyev did what he couldn't do at home: He sought out the great dance artists of the day. A half-century ago, ballet was an art in which national styles were distinct, and traditions mattered deeply. (Which is still true, but less so today.) A good parallel is with wine: While the French and Americans both make Chardonnay, the differences are immediately recognizable; likewise, while Russian and British dancers both do pirouettes, they do them very differently.

Nureyev was hungry for a taste of what dancers and dancemakers around the world were creating. Kavanagh makes the case that he craved the extra training and exposure more than other dancers because he came to ballet later than most. His early desire to catch up evolved into a lifelong obsession with exploring dance to the fullest extent before the clock could run out—a sense of urgency that also gave him a free pass for bad behavior. Upon his arrival there were two people he most wanted to learn from: Erik Bruhn, star of the Royal Danish Ballet, and George Balanchine, a fellow Russian heading the New York City Ballet. With Bruhn, a paragon of the Danish style as created by August Bournonville, Nureyev danced, absorbed, and fell deeply in love. Balanchine was a tougher case. At the New York City Ballet, where the main attraction has always been the choreography, there was no room for self-serving stars. As Balanchine firmly, and famously, told Nureyev in 1962: "When you are tired of playing at being a prince, come to me."

If the rejection stung, it was more than compensated for in the wild success that Nureyev was already enjoying with Britain's Royal Ballet. It was there that he became the partner of Margot Fonteyn, the aging prima ballerina whose career he invigorated and extended. From their first *Giselle* in 1962, they brought an unmatched level of celebrity and sex appeal to ballet.

With prose that sweeps along as smoothly as fiction, Kavanagh describes

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a number of important ways that Nureyev changed ballet as he set about working with everyone he could. In the 1960s, the British versions of Petipa ballets *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*, *Sleeping Beauty* relied heavily on mime, which was felt to be in keeping with the Russian originals. But off in their own corner, the Russians had eliminated much of that. To Nureyev, such gestures looked old-fashioned, and he reduced the onstage storytelling whenever possible. Says Kavanagh, these were works he felt should be preserved but not embalmed, dancers techniques and physiques having changed so dramatically over the century. He also wanted, and often created for himself, greater prominence for the male lead in the classic ballets. His interpretation of Albrecht, the nobleman who masquerades as a peasant and seduces the innocent Giselle, was of an immature and impulsive youth, a characterization that differed from the standard worldly aristocrat dallying with a pretty country girl.

While Nureyev had an outsized ego, Kavanagh goes out of her way to show that his earnest desire to learn made him easy to work with, even when he crossed over into modern dance to work with such choreographers as Martha Graham: Each was as solipsistic as the other—enraptured selfishness Graham's manager called it—and both had dedicated themselves totally and mercilessly to their art.

Along with the extreme dedication to art, however, came some complex, deeply unattractive personality traits. Nureyev was dogged in asking people for introductions and in pulling strings, and Kavanagh does not shy from showing that he used people, and discarded them easily. This is somewhat mitigated by his generosity in teaching and encouraging younger dancers: He plucked dancers from the corps (though not always for artistic reasons) and eagerly helped others, including Fonteyn, with technique. And while Nureyev was gifted at sharing information and reinventing ballets, he wasn't a stellar administrator, as evidenced by his tumultuous (though often productive) time as director of the Paris Opera Ballet. Although he spent millions on multiple residences—in London, New York, Paris, St. Barts, and Virginia—he didn't pay his contractors regularly and wouldn't hire a nurse when he was dying of AIDS.

Julie Kavanagh, former dance critic of the *Spectator* and editor of the London editions of *Vanity Fair* and the *New Yorker*, has done supremely well here. Her exemplary research gives an already-fascinating story great depth and richness; and while there are gossipy, explicit passages, such things are unavoidable in writing about a man whose fame was so closely linked to his sexuality. The 32 pages of photographs are a reminder of how it was that the world, not just the ballet world, could be so charmed by this risky, raw, uncompromising artist. ♦

On the Brink

England's Indian summer before the Great War.

BY TRACY LEE SIMMONS

Perhaps posing a bit for pithy immortality, Virginia Woolf famously declared that human nature changed somewhere in the leafy neighborhood of 1910. If Juliet Nicolson were to agree with the claim, she might offer the retort that the doyenne of Bloomsbury had jumped the gun a bit. The real change, she might say, got ushered in a year later when, as a plump England enjoyed one of the hottest summers in living memory, it also marked the formal end of the Edwardian era when the sober, earnest George V ascended the throne, and the British nation, happily oblivious to the guns of August that would commence firing three summers later, lazed languidly in its clubbable, stiff-collared prosperity and corseted propriety.

The Perfect Summer
England 1911, Just Before the Storm
by Juliet Nicolson
Grove, 304 pp., $25

This well-mannered, genteel world was a massively solid place, but it was also (as Disraeli had said of the Victorian age—and it was H.G. Wells who had once compared Queen Victoria to a paperweight on men's minds) made for the few, and for the very few. And this has become the common, complacent notion. But as Nicolson proves in this evocative book, that picture of English life, so easy to paint and make the stuff of stereotypes, does not bear microscopic scrutiny. There was much more to it.

Nonetheless, she daubs that old picture with its full colors. This was a society, if ever there was, that could be tagged as belonging exclusively, at its upper reaches, to "the idle rich." The lull before the worldwide catastrophe brought on, as Kenneth Clark described it, "a golden age," one that shimmered for the leisured classes. As Clark wrote of his own idly rich family during this period, while there were "many people [who] were richer, there can have been few who were idler." If one came from the right people, this must have been a jolly time and place in which to live. But even the untitled and not-so-rich found themselves entranced by a luminous, retrospective mirage.

The poet Siegfried Sassoon later referred to the sultry months of 1911 as "one of those specially remembered summers, from which one evolves a consistent impression of commingled

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happiness." A tone of elegy pervades memoirs of that year. "Sitting under the Irish yew," Sassoon eulogized, "we seemed to have forgotten that there was such a thing as the future." Late in May, Nicolson writes, the country "had begun to dance its way into high summer to the background sounds of Ragtime and Stravinsky, humming bees and the fizz of champagne." Apparently, throughout that long summer of 1911, England was Lotus Land.

Yet the title of this book stands at an oblique angle to the truth, as this opulent, extravagantly refined world was not quite what it seemed to the elegists. And this fact Nicolson documents with meticulous care. As the daughter of the Tory author and publisher Nigel Nicolson, and granddaughter of diplomat and diarist Sir Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West, Juliet Nicolson sports the pedigree to write about this period, and she does so with the dogged energy of a popular historian whose research is nonetheless thorough and well-sifted, and her material expertly arranged. If her writing at times sweetens itself with a cloying taste for the lyrical, she can be forgiven: Those expansive years in Great Britain just before the onset of the Great War prompt, in any sensible writer armed with a historical imagination, more than a touch of lyricism.

Nicolson sets up her book much like a diary with chapter headings marking the passage of time, two chapters per month, and takes us from May to September, chronicling events, high and low, and the principal characters who strutted their minutes on the stage, sometimes frivolously. We learn as much about the sparkling balls and fickle habits of the rich as we'll ever need to know, and yet what we learn isn't too much. The bold and brash 18-year-old Lady Diana Manners—later the actress and author Diana Cooper—makes this her coming-out season and turns every head for pages.

"We were on the go," wrote one habitué of the high life, "with a sort of frenzied madness of pleasure-seeking throughout every one of our waking hours." Even the lazy among this set can charm. Ida Sitwell strains to allay the burden of her boredom and fill "the blank stretch between hour and hour"—an effort, we gather, only partially successful. We're taken to the starchy dedication of the great marble monument to Victoria, unveiled in May, and then to the magnificent coronation of the new king the following month, where we learn that ladies were discouraged from wearing "hobble skirts" because that fashionable garment impeded the necessary curtsying to Their Majesties.

A fencing match at Knebworth, 1911

CORBIS SYGMA

Some might observe here that this age could produce shallowness on a prodigious scale, and no doubt that's so; but at least it was a shallowness exercised with flair and panache. With these people even solemnity could be playful.

But none of this spirited pomp and fun stopped the perceptive from feeling tremors under their feet. The 36-year-old Winston Churchill, already a veteran of Parliament, confided to his journal earlier in the year that "all the world is changing at once." And when Leonard Woolf returned from the overseas civil service, he found at home "a sweeping away of formalities and barriers," a discovery he thought "exhilarating." (Literary figures like Woolf, his future wife Virginia Stephen, Rupert Brooke, Lytton Strachey, the aforementioned Sassoon, and the eccentric bohemian painter Augustus John get splendid walk-on parts.)

Indeed, much of the world is changing from without. The horse-drawn carriage is disappearing from the streets of London, although not completely, and the arrival of cars, adding their fumes to the stench of manure, combines the worst of both worlds for the ambient nose. Light bulbs are replacing candles at balls and alter the old candlelit glitter of jewels. The first air post is flown in 1911.

But attitudes were altering as well. Boundaries of the forbidden were getting redrawn. Women's exchange of the corset for the brassiere eases abrupt, illicit encounters. Not only can sex be mentioned in certain socially liberal and sophisticated circles, but it can now be a source of ribald amusement. "Does it really matter what these affectionate people do in the bedroom," an actress remarks on the sexual mores of servants, "as long as they don't do it in the street and frighten the horses?"

However golden a time it seemed for the fortunate, the summer grew less perfect the longer it lasted. The warm temperatures, so welcome in May and early June, turned hot and unrelenting, wilting many a hearty

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soul and inspiring prayers to return to the wet, chilly spring. Drought overtook the normally cool, damp British Isles. With temperatures holding steady in the mid-80s and above in a country where summer clothes aren't commonly flimsy, no drop of rain was recorded for the first 20 days of July and, according to some, birdsong was silenced. Ominously, the *Times* started a new daily column, "Deaths From Heat," and the Royal Observatory at Greenwich ruefully (and for the first time) pronounced 100 degrees in the shade on August 10. Diarrhea from rancid food and milk killed hundreds, and in Liverpool, near-revolutionary conditions obtained, causing concern for then-Home Secretary Churchill. An impending strike of dockworkers—Churchill threatened military intervention—served only to heighten national anxiety.

The story of this time and place gets told through sources both familiar and obscure—Nicolson makes excellent use of memoirs—and she organizes them with democratic attention to both the Upstairs and Downstairs of 1911 English society. While we learn mostly of the rich and smart, no one is excluded, and Nicolson throws brighter light on what we now call social history—economic straitjacketing of the servant classes, advocacy for women's suffrage, problems of labor unrest—while a subtle vibration runs through contemporary accounts of the Kaiser's designs and ambitions.

Still, the most enduring residue of *The Perfect Summer* remains a set of kaleidoscopic images of another world, one past but still intimately linked to our own; and despite our knowing, as we read, of all that is to come for this generation and its children, the servings of mirth and humanity they have left behind still abide. Talking about the benefits of champagne, Churchill declared that it provides "a feeling of exhilaration" in which "the nerves are braced, the imagination is agreeably stirred, [and] the wits become more nimble." There's nothing momentous about this claim—except its truth, which is more or less perfect, and worth remembering. ♦

Coxey's Army in Masillon, Ohio, 1894

CORBIS SYGMA

America When Young

The birthing pains of an earlier republic.

BY EDWIN M. YODER JR.

Americans who take a serious interest in their history and how it is written will be familiar with a long-running argument among the pros. Is the great theme of our past consensus or conflict, harmony or dissidence? However one answers the question for himself—and most of us would, perhaps, say "much of both"—there is little doubt that Orville Vernon Burton is of the party of conflict and dissidence. Although subdued and modulated by scholarly mastery, the theme of *The Age of Lincoln*, a beautifully narrated treatment of the mid-to-late 19th-century years, is conflict. And plenty of it.

The Age of Lincoln
by Orville Vernon Burton
Hill and Wang, 432 pp., $27

Burton sets the stage with a brief résumé of the calm before the storm—the millennialist religiosity of the "second great awakening." Its defining scene came on October 22, 1844, when the pious Millerites gathered on their hilltops to witness the end of the world. Theirs, it seems, was a theology as chronologically meticulous as Archbishop Ussher's nice calculation of the Creation (October 4, 4004 B.C., if you didn't know) and featured a keen existential discontent with the here and now. When the End of Days was postponed, a worldly clamor of sectional conflict soon ensued. The issue was articulated by Abraham Lincoln, the emblematic figure of the era, in his House Divided speech: whether this experiment in self-government could endure "half slave and half free."

It was, perhaps, too little noticed, especially by Lincoln's critics, that Lincoln had posed the question but not answered it. Indeed, when as the newly elected president a few years later he became the emergency mediator, and sought compromises that might preserve the Union without war, his agnosticism on the question became quite clear. He would later tell Horace Greeley that if he could preserve the Union by freeing all the slaves, or some of them, or keeping all in bondage, he would do it.

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All through the 1850s the argument over slavery, though it featured competing certainties, took the surrogate form of a legal contest: Did slaveholders have a constitutional right to carry their chattel property wherever the flag flew?—an argument drastically sharpened by the Mexican war and its acquisitions.

Then followed Stephen A. Douglas's crafty Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, repealing the Missouri Compromise and opening Kansas to the possibility of slavery. The *Dred Scott* decision three years later seemed to ratify that repeal. Such measures stoked violent sectional anger. They signaled the abandonment of political wheeling and dealing, with its inevitable half measures, for more absolute claims of a moralistic tenor. Decades earlier, Thomas Jefferson had heard in that argument over Congress's power to ban slavery in the northern Louisiana territories a "firebell in the night." But the Missouri Compromise of 1820, drawing a line at 36'30" north latitude, split the difference and allowed the Senate to maintain a sectional balance, even as the House was steadily becoming more and more antislavery. Compromise was still possible in 1820, in large measure, because the dominant slaveholders of the upper South, like Jefferson himself, viewed slavery as a dying institution and welcomed its demise. By the mid-1850s the mood and the southern economy were very different. The slavery issue had been constitutionalized and legalized.

Then, as Lincoln put it, "the war came." It was a bloody interlude, however romanticized in memory, but the issue of American destiny did seem to be decided at the cost of some 600,000 lives. The appearance, however, was deceptive, the final decision deferred for later resolution.

It is when Burton reaches the crucial post-Civil War years that he hits his stride. It is a story that historians know and have explored extensively. But it is a story muted in the feel-good forms of popular historical understanding, not least the puff-stuff that too often passes for history on television. It is the story of a missed opportunity to consolidate the revolution of political equality (at least for men) implicit in the 14th and 15th Amendments, a failure in which both North and South were complicit. And the Supreme Court bowed to the zeitgeist, as usual, and in the *Slaughterhouse* and *Civil Rights* cases gutted the amendments. The only redeeming highlights of that dim judicial era were the passionate dissents of a former slaveholder and Union officer, Justice John Marshall Harlan of Kentucky. (Burton, with his eye for the piquant anomaly, notes that Harlan offered an invidious argument that if the despised Asian immigrants enjoyed equal protection, it was odd that freeborn native blacks did not.)

The fact was that legal, political, and economic reversals went hand in hand. One telling statistic speaks volumes: In

John Marshall Harlan

1860 there were 41 American millionaires, most of them southern planters. Ten years later there were 545, most of them northeasterners, presumably business tycoons, some only barely civilized. For obvious reasons, an agrarian nation had been less vulnerable to business cycles and the dislocations that go with them than the industrial America that mushroomed in the postwar era. Free laborers, concentrated in urban centers, were more inclined to unite and battle their bosses than a subdued slave population in the South or isolated homesteaders in the old Northwest and the Mississippi Valley.

Inevitably, chronic distress came, commencing with the Panic of 1873 and lasting, by Burton's reckoning, well into the 1890s. It produced, among sober effects, the Populist insurgency, with its pleas for railroad regulation and the monetization of silver. It also produced the pathetic Ohio-Washington march of Jacob Coxey's "army" of 500 jobless vagabonds. For Coxey, as for many of the theorists of that time, the remedy for distress was the endless printing of paper money. (The American Civil War, Burton says in one of many arresting formulations, was the first to be fought by "armies financed by paper money.") Coxey named his son Legal Tender, a name as symptomatic as that of Praise-God Barebones, for whom one 17th-century Cromwellian parliament is remembered.

But more significant politically was the ruthless overthrow of biracial governments in the South by the misnamed "Redemption" movement, which had nothing in common with its biblical namesake. It featured murder, night-riding, lynch law, and the transformation of the Democratic party into a vehicle of white supremacy. As president, Ulysses Grant struggled for a time to contain this counterrevolution; but his power was undercut by financial scandal, and after a final federal intervention in Louisiana in 1876-77, the federal government threw in its hand. Add to this other conflicts—over federal finance, railroad funding, land giveaways, Indian removal, etc.—and you have a wild, nonconsensus mix.

All this Burton narrates with a command of detail and sources that is reminiscent of Herbert Agar's forgotten classic *The Price of Union*, and of Burton's paragon, Alan Nevins. *The Age of Lincoln*, marked by a genius for piquant detail, amusing anecdote, and fluent, trenchant writing—and above all, by Lincoln's words and spirit—may be for some a depressing read. But again, it is a necessary read, a timely antidote to our tendency to swathe the conflicts of our past in self-flattering myths of brotherly love—as if we really were, all along, that sinless "city on the hill" erected by Heaven to instruct miscreant mankind.

One is, however, tempted to say that the story Burton tells witnesses against his title. An Age of Lincoln? If only it had been. If only it had shown more of Lincoln's generosity and political guile and less of the bumbling and cramped vision of smaller men. Rightly does Burton write, at midpoint of this fine book, that Lincoln's assassination was "a blow from which [America] has never recovered." ♦

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Duchess Wannabe

'Anastasia' fooled some of the people all of the time.

BY JUDY BACHRACH

In 1921, in an insane asylum just outside Berlin, an inmate registered as Fräulein Unbekannt ("Miss Unknown") gradually came to inhabit the demanding persona of the Grand Duchess Anastasia. At that point, the youngest child of the last czar of Russia, Nicholas II, and his wife Alexandra, was very likely dead, shot when she was just a teenager along with the rest of the Imperial Family. But it is also true that the Bolsheviks, who aimed at her and her family three years earlier, were hopelessly drunk and the scene of the massacre chaotic.

A Romanov Fantasy
Life at the Court of Anna Anderson
by Frances Welch
Norton, 340 pp., $24.95

As both royal parents were without a doubt murdered in Ekaterinburg, along with at least four of their five children and their remaining servants—one of whom made the mistake of struggling to her feet after a round of bullets and declaring, wrongly as things transpired, "God has saved me!"—there wasn't anyone left within her immediate circle to dispute the claims of a lunatic. The body of Anastasia, the most mischievous and spirited member of the Romanovs, was never—then or since—discovered, so anyone, really, could adopt her identity.

And as Frances Welch makes clear in her intelligent and often incongruously droll account of fraud and contagious credulity, in the case of Anastasia, anyone did. Even Hollywood swallowed the bait, sort of: Fans of Ingrid Bergman may recollect that, in a 1956 film costarring Yul Brynner, the actress played a role based in large measure on the cunning Fräulein, who received $30,000 from Twentieth Century Fox for her acquiescence. The studio, in turn, basically declared her to be the real ticket.

Always, however, there was plenty of evidence to suggest that a dose of healthy skepticism might have been in order. In the first place, Fräulein Unbekannt didn't dream up the royal identity for herself: It was suggested to her by a fellow asylum inmate who, on perusing the tabloids of the day, informed Fräulein U that she was actually a ringer for the (dead) Grand Duchess Tatiana, Anastasia's older sister. When this incarnation was disbelieved by the czarina's lady-in-waiting—who, on meeting the young woman, found her to be far too short to be Tatiana, dead or alive—Fräulein U casually remarked, "I never said I was Tatiana," and easily slid into the persona of Anastasia instead.

Or did she slide so easily? Throughout the history of Anna Anderson (as the would-be Anastasia ultimately permitted herself to be called by ever-changing sets of courtiers of assorted nationalities), there were a vast number of personal oddities on display, clues that might give pause to observers of normal intelligence. For example, the Grand Duchess claimed early on, before she grew more practiced, to have given birth to a child fathered by a common soldier on December 1, 1918: That would have been five months after the Bolsheviks shot her family. The new Anna/Anastasia was, significantly, a lot homelier than the original, and unable to speak Russian, although this last deficiency was explained away, as Welch dryly notes, by "supporters [who] maintained that the language had too many bad associations for her." She remembered almost nothing about Imperial Russia: "That is so far back and so dead, all so past," was her unvarying reply to the curious.

Academic triumphs also seemed to elude her, most notably the ability to count or tell time. The less biased might attribute these frailties to limited schooling and limited means—as, indeed, proved to be the case: Our Fräulein was actually born in Poland and used to wash bottles in a brewery—but her legions of fans were obdurate. You could be a Romanov and an illiterate! Why not? Or better still, a Romanov and an amnesiac! A German psychoanalyst—and what does this say about the profession?—declared after examining her that "the curious amnesia is a result of a more or

Anna Anderson (1955), Ingrid Bergman (1956) as Anastasia

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less deliberate engagement of the will. It is probably a case of loss of memory by auto-suggestion."

In other words, Professor Karl Bonhoeffer concluded unequivocally, the patient was, however damaged by personal trauma, indeed "the daughter of the Tsar" and not at all a fruitcake just because she kept 40 cats, some with maggots, or "a deliberate fraud." Nor was he alone in his opinion. The University of Mainz came to the conclusion that she was absolutely genuine; as did the anthropologist Otto Reche, the respected graphologist Minna Becker (who had a hand in authenticating Anne Frank's diary), and most important to Welch's story, Gleb Botkin, son of the Imperial Family's devoted physician and Anna's most devoted acolyte.

Ultimately, and perhaps inevitably, Anna was brought to the United States, birthplace of reincarnation. Here she married a wealthy guy named Jack who lived in Charlottesville, Virginia, called her Anastasia, and believed in her utterly. Ultimately, too, the story goes full circle, in a lot of ways: Anna's 1984 death certificate lists her father as "Czar Nikolai," and under the listing "Usual or Last Occupation," the word "Royalty" is typed.

In her tidy and well-written book, Frances Welch resists the temptation to analogize or even analyze this passion to believe in the unbelievable, which most of us in varying degrees share; and very likely this is to her credit. Anyway, who needs analysis when we have Prince Felix Yussoupov doing a Beliefnet play-by-play in the middle of the book? "If you had seen her, I am convinced that you would recoil in horror at the thought that this frightful creature could be a daughter of our Tsar," Yussoupov informed Grand Duke Andrew. "Hysterical, vulgar and common," was his verdict, and as Yussoupov was not simply a critic of character but also the assassin of the nasty monk Rasputin, who shared these same sad flaws, his judgment may be considered to carry some weight.

"These false pretenders ought to be gathered up and sent to live together in a house somewhere," the prince concluded with uncharacteristic moderation. ♦

Dwight D. Eisenhower, Herbert Brownell, Orval Faubus, 1957

PHOTOS © BETTMANN / CORBIS

The Quiet Crusade

Ike and the 'hidden-hand presidency' on civil rights.

BY STEPHEN HESS

This carefully researched and readable book on an important subject—civil rights during the Eisenhower administration—reconnects me to a time, 50 years ago, when I was a young White House speechwriter troubled by my boss's words—or, more accurately, by his failure to speak words that I thought the nation should hear.

A Matter of Justice
Eisenhower and the Beginning of the Civil Rights Revolution
by David A. Nichols
Simon & Schuster, 368 pp., $27

Drifting back in time, the Eisenhower staff then was so small that even its lowliest aides got invited to white tie state dinners:

September 17, 1960, a dinner for Crown Prince Akihito of Japan, the entertainers will be Todd Duncan, Gershwin's original Porgy, and Camilla Williams, the first African-American to be a regular at a major American opera company: I am thrilled to find that I am to be Ms. Williams's dinner partner. The White House social secretary, a gracious lady, pulls me aside to apologize for having put me in this awkward position . . .

During the eight years of the Eisenhower presidency, there were 102 senior assistants, collectively, measured by those who had White House Mess privileges. Three were white women (the social secretary, the president's personal secretary, and a deputy press secretary), and one black man, Frederic Morrow, whose job was more important to us than to the nation. As administrative officer, he controlled office and parking space. He was the first black executive on a White House staff—none under FDR or Harry Truman—and much was made of this.

The president and the men around him had little knowledge of black America. As Morrow makes clear in his angry book *Black Man in the White House* (1963), they were polite and remote. Nichols rightly credits a con-

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siderable portion of Ike's civil rights accomplishments to Attorney General Herbert Brownell, a New Yorker who had managed Tom Dewey's presidential campaigns. (Nichols uncovers a delicious footnote: Eisenhower recommended Brownell to President-elect Nixon in 1968 as his choice for chief justice. Nixon chose Warren Burger.)

Nichols wants to counter the "myth" of the Arthur Schlesingers of the world that Eisenhower's record on civil rights was evasive and uncaring. (Bruce Bartlett's new book, *Wrong on Race: The Democratic Party's Buried Past*, argues that it was also superior to John Kennedy's and the Democrats'.) His first task is to illustrate Eisenhower's exemplary work in those areas where his command was constitutionally given: This largely relates to desegregation in the District of Columbia, discrimination in federal employment and contracting, and completing Truman's desegregation of the armed forces.

Nichols's downplaying of the bad blood between Ike and his chief justice, Earl Warren, doesn't convince me; but Ike's record of picking judges who supported civil rights and the *Brown* decision, as Nichols points out, is impressive: William Brennan and John Marshall Harlan for the Supreme Court; in the South, Frank Johnson and John Minor Wisdom for the Fifth Circuit, Simon Sobel for the Fourth Circuit.

The groundbreaking parts of Nichols's research are those that were previously hidden from sight, excavated from the archives, and that show how wrong surface impressions of Eisenhower have been. This is similar in approach to Fred Greenstein's seminal *Hidden-Hand Presidency: Eisenhower as Leader* (1982). The Civil Rights Act of 1957, for instance, for which credit usually goes to Senate Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson, now, under the Nichols revision, must be shared with Eisenhower and Brownell—and with Johnson actually gutting the strongest provision. And in the book's most riveting chapters—the Little Rock crisis and subsequent military intervention—we see Eisenhower constantly confronted by Arkansas Governor Orval Faubus's duplicity. How does a president, dedicated to a federal system, tell the nation that a governor is lying?

Where I—and Americans to the left of Eisenhower—separated from the president was in his words, not deeds. He preferred to frame civil rights as legal issues, rather than matters of morality, as in his statement when the *Brown* decision was handed down: "The Supreme Court has spoken and I am sworn to uphold the constitutional processes in this country; and I will obey"—with never a comment from the White House on the merits of the decision.

Would we have accomplished more for civil rights if Eisenhower had chosen the banner of moral leadership? I was wondering about this shortly before I read *A Matter of Justice*, inspired by a recent article ("Learning from Ike") by Jonathan Rauch in *National Journal*. Rauch, writing about international relations, not civil rights, sees Ike as a realist who sought to manage evil rather than risk overreaction and destabilization. (Rauch sees a lesson for our times.) Fifty years ago, Dwight Eisenhower, the Kansas realist, may also have accurately calibrated the national threshold on civil rights.

I loved working for President Eisenhower, even as I was slightly embarrassed by where he positioned himself on civil rights. Thanks to Nichols, I feel better now. There was movement in Ike's stance toward the close of his presidency. I'm proud that Nichols opens his penultimate chapter with this summing-up from Eisenhower's final State of the Union address, delivered on January 12, 1961, and contributed by a young speechwriter:

> This pioneering work in civil rights must go on. Not only because discrimination is morally wrong, but also because its impact is more than national—it is worldwide. ♦

Lost Kingdom

A 1964 memoir conjures old Afghanistan.

BY ANN MARLOWE

Land of the High Flags is an artifact of a time when a foreigner could unabashedly enjoy being in Afghanistan the way one enjoyed Kenya or India or Sicily, even while going there to do good. Now, Afghanistan is a "war zone" in everyone's eyes, and a sense of its granularity has been lost in the clichés. The 1950s Kabul that Rosanne Klass entered as a novice high school teacher was a poor country which Westerners were trying to modernize, and which some fell in love with. Klass—still a feisty Afghanistan expert in New York—chronicles this love affair in a burnished, formal style that was slightly antiquated even in 1964. Perhaps she was influenced by Freya Stark, Gertrude Bell, and other well-born lady travelers in the Muslim world, or by the Victorian novels she must have read in her childhood.

Land of the High Flags
Afghanistan When the Going Was Good
by Rosanne Klass
Odyssey, 358 pp., $19.95

It feels of a piece that Klass manages to get through the whole book without discussing the husband with whom she went to Afghanistan (and from whom she was soon to be divorced) and that she visits Jews in Afghanistan without ever saying that she is Jewish (though it can be inferred from her surname and a dis-

Ann Marlowe is the author, most recently, of The Book of Trouble: A Romance.

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creet reference to a *Succoth* of her youth). This is the high old practice, and has its merits. Klass is preoccupied with others rather than herself, and always ready to see the good side of the people she meets, when there is one.

Perhaps for this reason, her characters live. Klass's portraits of her students could have been drawn yesterday; they reminded me of the college kids I taught for a couple of weeks at a time in Mazar-i-Sharif a few years ago, in their very un-American combination of deference, earnestness, and fecklessness. The time is gone when one could write chapters on one's bearer, but Klass's portrait of the Peshawar Pashtun Gul Baz is a joy. He is an individual, not a representative of a social class or ethnic group, as are all the other household servants Klass depicts.

Another major character is Klass's boss at the time, Dr. Abdul Kayeum (who went on to become vice-president of the Helmand River Authority, a provincial governor, minister of education, and, eventually, an exile in America—he also appears in Tamim Ansary's *West of Kabul, East of New York*). Like Gul Baz, he can seem too good to be true, but I lay that up to Klass's youthful goodwill.

Affection does not blunt her keen eye for the fault lines of expat society, and the irrelevance to it of Afghans:

> One made a point of liking them, and was, indeed, politely deferential, because it was, after all, their country which one was there to deal with, to instruct or to improve. In sum, one did everything short of meeting them as individuals. It was on the whole as unexpected to really like an Afghan personally as it was improper to dislike him personally. . . . Most of the colony thought it surprising . . . if a foreigner and an Afghan became close friends. That they might simply like each other was scarcely considered.

The one criticism that leaps out at this reader, on her second tour through *Land of the High Flags*, is that Klass seems a bit too infatuated with the good old days. (The book was first published in 1964.) She hasn't been to Afghanistan in decades. If she had visited in the last few years, she might not have selected the subtitle "Afghanistan When the Going Was Good." Any nostalgia applies more to the lifestyle of expats—today they are called "internationals"—than to Afghans, who now enjoy a much higher standard of living, more legal rights, a much larger chance of seeing their children grow up, and many more opportunities than in 1951 (or just about any time in history).

STAFF / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Street scene in Kabul, 1962

It's true that an ancient culture has been weakened, its upper class scattered and shorn of its confidence and sense of responsibility. It is true that, in the cities, ugly cement boxes have replaced lovely and comfortable mudbrick homes, crude new carpets are now preferred to the masterworks of the past, and many traditional crafts live on only in the pallid form of charity projects for Afghan women. It is also true that imported religious extremism and politicized Islam have replaced what was once a fairly tolerant culture, at least in the larger towns and cities, and at least for the prosperous. Older Afghan women have told me that, in provincial capitals in the 1960s, they used to ride bicycles to school and wear miniskirts with their headscarves; today their granddaughters aren't allowed to ride bikes ("unfeminine") and their skirts reach the floor.

But the society Rosanne Klass saw was dysfunctional and heartbreakingly poor. In 1960, 245 out of every thousand Afghan children died before their first birthday. The number was 165 in 2001 and 135 in 2006. Maternal mortality in Afghanistan in 1950 must have been astronomical; it had fallen to 3,070 per 100,000 in 1978 and a still-appalling 1,600 per 100,000 today, the highest in the world. (By comparison, around 1900, the American rate was about 900 out of 100,000.)

Life expectancy today for Afghans is 43 years, but in 1970 it was 38, and God knows what it was in 1950. Such numbers remind us that the notion that Afghanistan is undergoing "reconstruction" to bring it back to some acceptable prewar condition is a fantasy. Most of the country wasn't destroyed in the war, for the good reason that there was little infrastructure to destroy outside of the few cities. Most Afghans didn't live remotely well in 1800, in 1900, or in 1950.

Of course, Klass was aware that the society she lived in was flawed. In fact, the diagnosis she made in 1964 still stands: "Pride and self-contempt mingled are a cruel burden to bear. . . . Xenophobia grows from such twisted roots as these. . . . Praise change, and you might be understood . . . as implying . . . 'Your own uniqueness was nothing very much worth having.'" But perhaps out of affection, and the optimism of the postwar years, she lets Afghan society off the hook too easily.

It didn't help that Afghanistan is impossibly mountainous, with only 14 percent arable land, or that it is in a bad neighborhood with aggressive neighbors. But most of Afghanistan's poverty can be blamed on a long line of terrible governments and the absence of civil society. The Afghan-Australian historian Amin Saikal in *Modern*

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Afghanistan tells the unsparing truth: From the Mohammadzai ascendancy in 1747 until the Soviet invasion of 1979, Afghan society was characterized by "highly repressive administration" and elites that denied many major groups access to power, relying on support from foreign powers.

I can't measure the losses, since I first visited Afghanistan in 2002, but neither can Klass be fully aware of the gains. I don't only mean Afghanistan's astounding recent economic growth, with GDP growing an average of 9.375 percent a year from 2003 to 2007—more than the 8.9 percent growth rate of Russia, India, and China in a similar period. Today, Afghans of all backgrounds and in almost all regions have some awareness that they have opportunities and choices in life—they have, at least, dipped their toes into the confusing, entrancing, cynical larger world. The past two decades that dispersed the elite and its ancient culture also opened this most hidebound of societies to social mobility. The upper class lost its sense of noblesse oblige, yes, but the lower orders also lost the habit of deference. Given that everything in Afghan society conspired against risk-taking or experimentation, this is no small advancement.

Klass went back to Afghanistan as a reporter in the 1960s, joined Freedom House in 1980, and founded the Afghanistan Information Center, heading it from 1980 until 1991. She was one of the founders of the Afghanistan Relief Committee and knew everyone who mattered in Afghanistan before, during, and after the jihad. (She donated her papers to the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins in 2005.) She edited and contributed to an essay collection—*Afghanistan: The Great Game Revisited* (1988) published by Freedom House—which is still worth reading. Its emphasis on the degree of Soviet *success* in dominating Afghanistan and destroying its society has been lost in today's eagerness to portray insurgencies/resistance movements as history's "winners." But she has not written another book with the flair and poetry of her first. That makes this reissue of *Land of the High Flags* a poignant, as well as happy, event. ♦

Soberania National Park, Panama

BLAINE HARRINGTON III / CORBIS

The Sky's the Limit

How and why Americans chronicle our birds.

BY SOHEIL ZENDEH

Scott Weidensaul claims that birding is now mainstream in America. When I read that I wondered which one of us had been drinking. Birding mainstream? You've got to be kidding.

But then I got to reflecting about my own experience. In the 1970s, within a year of when I started birding, I knew almost everyone in the eastern Massachusetts birding scene by sight and name (I had a lot better memory then). Of course, as a beginning birder, I traveled more and introduced myself to more people and asked more questions. Still, there were really only about 50 or 100 active birders in the eastern part of the state. Nowadays, I have absolutely no idea of the total numbers, but just the list of subscribers to *massbird*, the local birding listserve, must exceed 500. I simply don't know most of the people I meet when I go out birding. Those obscure spots along the Boston shore which were just mine to bird now have their dozens of young and eager observers, who know their birds and who also, and often, get stunning photos of the birds they see.

Of a Feather
A Brief History of American Birding
by Scott Weidensaul
Harcourt, 368 pp., $25

Still—birding mainstream? Weidensaul starts with an anecdote-rich series of chapters on early American naturalists and ornithologists. A delightful vignette involves the Hopi observation that certain nightjars sleep through the winter in a "deathlike trance." This idea was pooh-poohed by ornithologists for many years, but then hibernating Common Poorwills were discovered by modern ornithologists in the 1940s. Says Weidensaul: "Sadly, I don't know the Hopi . . . for 'We told you so.'"

Many more stories follow: of John White and John Lawson exploring the

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wilderness of the Carolinas; of Mark Catesby, who traveled throughout the southeast shooting and painting birds and writing about the new wildlife he was finding in America for his public back in England. That was the early 18th century. By the middle of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries, new explorers such as John Bartram and Lewis and Clark of expedition fame were opening the central and western parts of North America to natural history and ornithological exploration.

Then come the big names: Alexander Wilson and John James Audubon who, improbably, met in a store in Louisville and parted amid mutual disdain and jealousy. Wilson was peddling his paintings of American birds and Audubon was just beginning to plan his collection of American bird paintings. Weidensaul's telling of the Audubon/Wilson meeting is mysteriously spread out over two chapters, with a beginning that sets you up for a twist ending. Indeed, the kaleidoscopic stories of criss-crossing personalities and bird information, politics and human relations, keep things racing along. Weidensaul's such a good storyteller that he sometimes loses track of one story and then starts another one, but eventually the stories resolve and we are on our way to the modern era.

The role of women in early American ornithology has been sparsely documented. But toward the end of the 19th century, powerful and influential women began to put their stamp on the world of natural history studies: Martha Maxwell, Florence Merriam Bailey, Harriet Lawrence Hemenway, Minna B. Hall, Cordelia Stanwood, Mabel Osgood Wright—all overcame the structural sexism of the age and collected birds, or wrote about them, or in the case of Hemenway and Hall, started the movement to ban bird feathers in women's fashions, which led to the modern conservation movement.

All these tales are inspiring, and fun to read, whether you're a birder or not. Weidensaul does not make it clear, but I want to make it very clear: Birders are really different. What they read, what they think, how they see things, how they plan vacations, their vocabulary, the angle of their necks, the tilt of their heads, the roving eyes—let's not pretend that birders are just like other people but with a "burning interest" in birds or any other such nonsense. Call it compulsion, or masochism, or inspiration—what else can explain why birders get up at ungodly hours and trek to smelly places such as sewage lagoons to look for small brown jobs picking along the edges of said lagoon; or tromp through bug-infested swamps listening for the sibilant voices of warblers so high up in trees that they don't even try to see them?

This is not "ordinary" behavior, and Weidensaul is part of the fraternity that thinks such behavior is normal. Yet for three-quarters of his book, he stays with the normal crowd who go to bed at a reasonable hour and get up at a reasonable hour and whose idea of a day at the beach is sitting under an umbrella with a good book rather than tromping around the mudflat looking at little blobs of sandpipers trying to see which one might be the Siberian.

Most birders 'collect' birds, in the sense that identification and ticking off on the list is all there is to birding—all while habitats are disappearing at a faster and faster rate.

Then, for the final quarter, Weidensaul returns to his roots. After all, he is a native of Pennsylvania and he is a birder. He knows the birding world. He knows the people I know—or at least I want to know. He goes birding with David Sibley and hobnobs with Rich Stallcup and Pete Dunne. He discusses the origins of field guides and describes the weaknesses and strengths of the various types in detail. If you want to get into birding, this is a great introduction; but for the general reader, this latter chunk can be hard going, what with the lack of juicy anecdotes and semihistorical legends. Yet Weidensaul has targeted a larger issue, and that becomes his focus toward the end. He wants to preach "beyond the list."

If you're a birder, you keep a list. Actually, you keep multiple lists: your life list (all the birds species you've ever seen), your year list, your feeder or yard list; city, county, state, country, and world lists; one-day Big Day lists and Big Sit lists. Weidensaul even knows someone who kept a list of birds she saw while copulating. Weidensaul then explains that one turn in birding not taken in the 1940s was suggested by Joseph Hickey, who wrote *A Guide To Bird Watching*. Hickey had a load of suggestions about what birders could do with their time other than chase and list rare birds. He suggested field studies and behavior studies and statistical studies of common birds, and though he inspired many people, the story of modern birding (so far) has been one that is diametrically opposed to the Hickey credo. Most birders "collect" birds, in the sense that identification and ticking off on the list is all there is to birding—all while bird habitat, and natural unspoiled habitat of all sorts, is disappearing at a faster and faster rate.

In language that ranges from subtle, understated, and somber to peevish and impatient, Weidensaul bears witness to his own conversion from "ticker," "twitcher," or lister to bird-watcher to naturalist. He describes the work that he and a group of volunteers do in the Pennsylvania woods in late fall, mist-netting and banding Saw-whet owls, an effort that has taught us a great deal about this extremely common, poorly known, and little-studied raptor; and an effort that is used to draw schoolchildren who, once they see an owl barely larger than a dinner glass, are likely to become hooked on birds.

Scott Weidensaul wants to be the prophet who brings new people into the orbit of birds, as well as the Jeremiah who warns birders about the folly of their heedless pursuit of the record and the list. His manner is engaging and his pedigree in the birding world couldn't be higher. Now, if I can only get my birding friends to read this to the end. ♦

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Booked Up

A critic's anthology of literary bliss.

BY JOHN SIMON

Back in 1486, when books were scarce, 23-year-old Pico de la Mirandola could declare himself *de omni re scibili magister*, master of everything knowable. In those quattrocento days, if you were a prodigy like Pico, it was just barely possible. Almost 400 years later, in 1865, Stephane Mallarme began his lovely poem *Brise marine* ("Sea Breeze") with, "The flesh is sad, alas, and I have read all the books," but that surely was poetic hyperbole.

Classics for Pleasure
by Michael Dirda
Harcourt, 352 pp., $25

Now comes Michael Dirda's *Classics for Pleasure*, brief essays about books Dirda considers essential, or just a tiny bit less essential than those he wrote about in a couple of previous collections. As you read these delightful mini-essays, two-to-five pages long, most of them full of glancing references to other books besides their subjects, you may well conclude that Dirda has indeed read everything worth reading.

To be sure, as a former editor for the *Washington Post*'s *Book World*, and its subsequent book columnist (excellent in both capacities), he had and has the advantage of making reading both his leisure pursuit and his work, his predilection and his livelihood. Even so, how many people nowadays can lay claim to such productive ambidextrousness? Offhand, only one candidate leaps to mind, John Updike—not a bad fellow to share a bracket with. Extensive reading and lively writing about it are not usually Siamese twins; in Dirda, though, they are. Moreover, in these tightly-packed pieces, Dirda may tell you, if his authors wrote in English, which of various editions is the best; if in other languages, how different translations compare. Reading him you feel as trusting as a backseat rider driven by a master chauffeur.

There are 88 pieces in the book: Eighty-three about individual writers, one about a pair (E. Nesbit and John Masefield), four about groups of writings (Icelandic sagas, Arthurian romances, the English religious tradition, classic fairy tales). And in the pieces about single authors, Dirda usually writes about several of their books,

Michael Dirda

if not indeed their entire *oeuvre*. Though writers in English preponderate, there are plenty from all ages and in all sorts of languages and genres. His four oldest subjects are Lao-tse, Heraclitus, Sappho, and Lucian; his four most recent, Philip K. Dick, Eudora Welty, Italo Calvino, and Edward Gorey, which should clue you in that every genre, from philosophy to science fiction, from belles letters to whimsy, is grist for this omnivorous mill.

In his brief introduction, Dirda explains that classics are not boring *pensums* deemed good for you, but books that are a pleasure to read, and have, in many cases, been so for centuries. "Sappho's heartache is that of anyone who has ever been hopelessly in love. Ernst Junger's *Storm of Steel* starkly reveals both the horror and exhilaration of war. The Book of Common Prayer reliably comforts us in times of sorrow, uplifts us in times of celebration." And further, he writes, "my approach is that of a passionate reader rather than a critic or scholar. I love the Icelandic sagas and Thomas Love Peacock's 'conversation' novels and the poetry of C.P. Cavafy, and I want you to love them, too."

Rather than reiterate the merits of a Shakespeare or Dickens, he takes you along less-traveled but equally scenic and adventurous routes: Rider Haggard's *She*, Jean Toomer's *Cane*, G. K. Chesterton's *The Man Who Was Thursday*, Jaroslav Hasek's *The Good Soldier Svejk*. Also the poetry of George Meredith and Anna Akhmatova, the fantastic tales of E.T.A. Hoffmann and H.P. Lovecraft, and the novels of Eca de Queiros, Jules Verne, and Ivy Compton-Burnett. He explains his choices persuasively: his love of great stories, exciting poems, and humanist philosophies. (Among the latter he includes Spinoza, whom I find unreadable.) And he explains why some favorites are not in *Classics for Pleasure*—Isaac Babel, Ford Madox Ford, and Colette—because they are in his previous collections.

Be it said here that the little essays are equal fun whether you know their subjects or not. If you don't, they will easily entice you into reading the authors discussed; if you do, you will be stimulated by Dirda's fresh outlook into rereading them. As pleasing as the works they promulgate, the essays, thematically grouped, are a true smorgasbord for the mind—or rather, hors d'oeuvres so tasty that you can't wait for the oeuvres.

The writing is always plain yet pungent, sometimes inspired, and wearing its erudition as lightly as a pair of lived-in pajamas:

> Cavafy is primarily an elegist, capable of recalling with equal emotion the touch of a hand and the fall of an empire, of memorializing both the carnal favorites of ancient Antioch and

John Simon writes about theater for Bloomberg News.

WASHINGTON POST

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the perfect limbs of the dirty young blacksmith down the street. To this Greek living in Egypt among Arabs and British colonials the world appears as a palimpsest: When Cavafy looks at Alexandria, he glimpses, beneath the blandness of a modern urban wasteland, the playground of youthful gods.

Again:

If reading the Victorians may be likened to devouring a rich Christmas feast, reading [Prosper] Merimee is like sipping a dry Martini—cold, bracing, and delicious. Be warned however: His characters may be primitive or exotic people, but that only means that they are stripped of the meretricious veneer of so much polite society. As a result, they reveal our most primal fears and secret desires with heartless and dreadful clarity.

Or this tribute to Switzerland's Jacob Burckhardt:

Even though Burckhardt was to make his name as a historian of the Italian Renaissance, he was an equally notable authority on the culture of ancient Greece and the reign of Byzantium's Constantine the Great. In those days, many scholars refused to confine their efforts to some narrow field of specialization; in fact, they ranged across subjects with the swagger of adventurers, soldiers of fortune, condottieri."

Also:

"Last night I dreamt I went to Manderley again." With these unforgettable words the reader is launched into one of the most powerful visions of … what? Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca* is a far more complex work of art than commonly believed, being one of the half dozen greatest romance novels of the century and a subtle undercutting of the whole romance genre. It is simultaneously a devastating examination of the sexual politics of marriage, a haunting study of jealousy and psychological obsession, and a classic of suspense.

For such good offices I am almost willing to forgive Dirda's little lapses: "Disinterest" (for uninterest), "a novel like this" (for this one), "the military tribunal Scipio Africanus" (for tribune), and Ovid's famous "*Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor*" transmogrified into "*Video melora proque deteriora sequor.*" But I must stop now, and go off in search of Dirda's no-doubt equally pleasurable earlier collections. ♦

In Brief

Some holiday suggestions for the thinking man's coffee table. **BY PHILIP TERZIAN**

***Houses of the Founding Fathers: The Men Who Made America and the Way They Lived* by Hugh Howard, photographs by Roger Straus III (Artisan, 354 pp., $50).** The world of late 18th-century America is intriguingly antique and endlessly diverting, and while the Founders were hardly representative of the citizenry, they were surely characteristic of their time and place. The Federal simplicity of John Jay's homestead in New York is as strikingly different from Arthur Middleton's sumptuous Middleton Place in South Carolina as Puritan New England is from Cavalier Virginia. This is a rich and intelligent combination of informative text and beguiling pictures.

***The Art and Science of William Bartram* by Judith Magee (Pennsylvania State, 264 pp., $45).** William Bartram (1739-1823), son of a pioneering Philadelphia botanist, and a traveler, diarist, gardener, and student of wildlife, may be said to be America's first great naturalist. In the mid-1770s he embarked on a long tour of the southern back country, notably the Cherokee lands of Georgia and the Carolinas and Florida, recording his stunning observations and master drawings of birds, fish, snakes, and plants—and one Seminole chief—now housed in London's Natural History Museum. This is a thoroughly delightful, and hypnotic, collection of science-as-art, skillfully annotated.

***George III: A Life in Caricature* by Kenneth Baker (Thames & Hudson, 192 pp., $45).** King George III (1738-1820) had the luck, or misfortune, of sitting on the throne during the golden age of caricature, and his 60-year reign was faithfully chronicled by such skilled assassins as James Gillray, Thomas Rowlandson, and Isaac Cruikshank. Their cruel, deft, pointed, and hilarious depictions of their sovereign are reproduced here in glorious color, along with the works of lesser, but no less entertaining, lights such as William Dent, whose comic taste for vomiting, flatulence, and other bodily functions will startle modern readers. Kenneth Baker, a veteran of Tory cabinets and collector of political art, has the insider's knowledge of British politics, and requisite dry humor, to make this volume irresistible.

***Amazing Rare Things: The Art of Natural History in the Age of Discovery* by David Attenborough, with Susan Owens, Martin Clayton, and Rea Alexandratos (Yale, 224 pp., $37.50).** Strictly speaking, this is not all that different from the Bartram portfolio described above—plates of flora and fauna, beautifully reproduced—but Attenborough, public TV's nature impresario, and his colleagues have assembled a sterling collection of drawings and watercolors by artists (Leonardo Da Vinci), explorer/naturalists (Mark Catesby, Maria Sibylla Merian), and scientific illustrators (Alexander Marshal) in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle. This is the natural world as seen through the eyes of the late Renaissance, wonderfully vivid, perceptive, and exotic.

***The Human Animal in Western Art and Science* by Martin Kemp (Chicago, 320 pp., $40)** begins with some arresting depictions of the four humors, and proceeds to demonstrate, in five centuries of high and low art, the common themes of the animal and human worlds, in appearance, perception, and behavior. Not everyone may share the vision of Kemp, an Oxford art historian, but it is an arresting one. ♦

Philip Terzian is literary editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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"Israeli and Palestinian leaders made new efforts on Monday toward preparing a joint statement ahead of an international peace gathering planned for next week, but some issues remain to be resolved, Israeli and Palestinian officials said." **—New York Times, *November 20, 2007***

From: Olmert, Ehud <Chosen11561@aol.com>
Date: Monday, November 19, 2007 10:58 AM
To: Mahmoud Abbas <Abbaddass138@gmail.com>
Subject: edits

Dearest Mahmoud:

Attached are my edits to the Joint Statement for the upcoming Annapolis conference. Don't panic--it looks like I changed a lot but in fact I merely tightened it. Let me know what you think. BTW, what are you wearing to cocktail reception Fri. night?

-Ehud

From: Abbas, Mahmoud <Abbaddass138@gmail.com>
Date: Monday, November 19, 2007 12:01 PM
To: Ehud Olmert <Chosen11561@aol.com>
Subject: re: edits

Ehud,

No offense but WTF? There are a few things I'd like to change back, including control over Jerusalem, the number of Hamas and Islamic Jihad prisoners we want released (all of them), and the eviction of all settlers. Other than that, looks good to me.

-Mahmoud

P.S. Will be wearing dark blue suit to cocktail party.

From: Olmert, Ehud <Chosen11561@aol.com>
Date: Monday, November 19, 2007 12:34 PM
To: Mahmoud Abbas <Abbaddass138@gmail.com>
Subject: re: re: edits

Hi Mahmoud,

Do you sail? Annapolis has got some great sailing if you're interested. Just a thought! Also, let's leave out those issues you mentioned (TMI!) since we cannot agree on any of them. I still think it works though. Thoughts?

TTYL,
Ehud

From: Abbas, Mahmoud <Abbaddass138@gmail.com>
Date: Monday, November 19, 2007 1:06 PM
To: Ehud Olmert <Chosen11561@aol.com>
Subject: re: re: re: edits

EO:

No, I do not sail. But I do like seafood and I've been advised to try the crabs if they are in season, Insha'Allah. As for Joint Statement, fine by me. So far let me read to you what I have: "It's great to be here in Annapolis."

And to be honest, I do not know if it is so great. I saw the movie "Annapolis" and did not like it at all. (Or did I miss the nude scene?)

-MA

From: Olmert, Ehud <Chosen11561@aol.com>
Date: Monday, November 19, 2007 1:10 PM
To: Mahmoud Abbas <Abbaddass138@gmail.com>
Subject: re: re: re: re: edits

OMG. You've never been to Annapolis? You'll like it a lot. Especially the Naval Academy's new exhibit on Battleship New Jersey. (And no, you didn't miss anything. LOL. But if you like Jordana Brewster, check out D.E.B.S.)

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